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The Military and the Maya In Guatemala
Ethnicity and Economic Development In the Making of a Massacre

by

Terrance William Kading ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Political Science

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Abstract

The dissertation is a distinct account of the military's motives for undertaking an extremely violent and indiscriminate assault against the Maya inhabitants of the northern highlands in the early 1980s. The main argument throughout the dissertation is that there are two dissimilar socio - political experiences rooted in the ethnic division in Guatemala, one comprised of the Ladino - Spanish speaking minority that has dominated economic and political life in Guatemala since the late 1800s, and the other being the Maya majority, indigenous descendants of the various peoples occupying the Guatemalan territory at the time of the Spanish conquest. Due to this particular cultural composition, itself unique in the Central American isthmus, I argue that ethnicity is a primary variable in understanding political dynamics and events within Guatemala. Into the 1970s, ethnic identification and the resulting racism were still apparent at all levels of society, as Ladinos controlled all major political, economic, and socio - cultural activities. At this time, and in concert with an array of civilian political forces, the military began to elaborate grand strategies for a national economic transformation based on the northern highland and lowland regions. Such a strategy entailed increasing contact with the Maya majority who resided within and next to a vast zone targeted for state - induced economic restructuring. In tracing out the dimensions of the Ladino state's agenda for northern Guatemala, I have attempted to ascertain why the military's violent assault was directed at certain regions over others, why it took place in the form that it did, and why it happened in this particular time period. In emphasizing the confluence of ethnic and economic factors, I believe it is possible to explain more fully the thinking and motives of the military as it violently imposed a permanent presence across northern Guatemala. What emerges is a distinctive account of how the Ladino state entered into a brutal assault against the Maya communities of northern Guatemala.

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Introduction

The following dissertation, entitled The Military and the Maya In Guatemala: Ethnicity and Economic Development In the Making of a Massacre, is a distinct account of the military's motives for undertaking an extremely violent and indiscriminate assault against the Maya inhabitants of the northern highlands in the early 1980s. The assault consisted of the total destruction of some 440 Maya communities, the internal displacement of one million people, an exodus of tens of thousands of people to Mexico, and the deaths of some fifty thousand between 1980 and 1984, followed by a deep military entrenchment across the northern highlands. My initial inspiration for seeking out an alternative explanation for the extreme violence that took place in the Maya highlands arose from the contradictory claims of scholars, observers and human rights organizations surrounding events of the 1980s within this country, and whether or not the Maya had become active participants in a revolutionary war in support of the various guerrilla organizations. Such a scholarly controversy included those observers who saw the Maya people as "revolutionary protagonists" (near achieving a revolutionary victory), those who saw them as involved in a limited "peasant rebellion," those who saw the Maya as at best "reluctant participants" in the highland conflict, those who saw them as "innocent victims" caught between two Ladino armies, and those who saw this as a military attack on the Maya unrelated to the guerrilla presence at all. Noteworthy in this controversy was that political scientists, sociologists, and historians tended to advance the view of the Maya as a true revolutionary subject versus anthropologists who tended to adopt one of the latter positions. With this scholarly divergence on what was occurring in the Maya highlands there also emerged contradictory assessments concerning the Guatemalan military and political regimes over this time period, some suggesting that the Guatemalan state was on the verge of being overthrown by the revolutionary forces, while others claimed that the military was engaged in a genocidal assault on the Maya population disproportionate to the threat from this population. It was evident from these divergent characterizations and assessments concerning events of the 1980s that several aspects of Guatemalan society remained inadequately understood, specifically the political character of the Maya majority prior to and during the military's violent attack on the highlands.

The main argument throughout this dissertation is that there are two dissimilar socio-political experiences rooted in the ethnic division in Guatemala, one comprised of the Ladino - Spanish speaking minority that has dominated economic and political life in Guatemala since the late 1800s, and the other being the Maya majority, indigenous descendants of the various peoples occupying the Guatemalan territory at the time of the Spanish conquest. Due to this particular cultural composition, itself unique in the Central American isthmus, I argue that ethnicity is a primary variable in understanding political dynamics and events within Guatemala. The originality of an ethno - political account of the factors leading to the extreme violence of the early 1980s, lies in treating the Maya majority as long having political significance within the society whether or not sectors of the Maya people were politically active. Examined historically, the Ladino - Maya relationship reveals a persistent line of racist attitudes and practices that became entrenched among Ladino sectors with the establishment of coffee as the major national export in the mid - to late 1800s. With the advent of coffee, the status of the Maya was recast by powerful Ladino political and economic forces, reducing the former to a virtual slave status in relation to the lucrative coffee industry. Over time, I argue, a racist ideology became independent of those economic sectors i.e. coffee producers, that had benefited directly from exploiting the Maya. As the economy diversified and expanded, what was retained was a set of derogatory images and beliefs about the Maya which justified their political, economic and cultural exclusion from "national" life.

This racist ideology was strongly expressed in the middle class nationalist discourse that arose with the 1944 revolution, a discourse that persisted after the resignation of Jacobo Arbenz in 1954, in the face of the U.S. backed invasion by counter - revolutionary forces. Although the more radical ends of the 1944 - 54 period were terminated, i.e. land reform, what persisted was a nationalist Ladino ideology that envisioned the state playing a pivotal role in developing, or modernizing, the nation economically and socially. The Ladino discourse concerning the modernization of the country was an exclusive vision of various rural and urban middle class sectors that have dominated the state since 1944. The exclusionary aspect of this vision was most apparent in relation to the Maya majority, considered to be the major impediment to national development and socio - cultural integration, and thus the object most in need of a transformation if the Maya were to become part of Guatemala's dominant socio - cultural group and Guatemala was to advance. Such sentiments pervaded almost all Ladino sectors from the political left to the right, fostering a Ladino national discourse on the Maya majority that was a mixture of pity and scorn, imbued with a paternal - authoritarianism in relating to the Maya while desirous of the eventual demise of the Maya culture, or presence, and the "Indian problem." Given this Ladino consensus on the Maya question, I explore the various dimensions of a racist - nationalist discourse, demonstrating how it has shaped political debates and conflicts. Most importantly, I highlight how this particular discourse on the Maya severely limited the possibilities for democratic, reformist or revolutionary change in Guatemala. Although the politics of the Maya - Ladino tension were ever - present, it did not dominate intellectual discussions of politics in Guatemala until recently.

Throughout the dissertation I make reference to the "class - dependency" perspective, a perspective that rose to prominence in the 1960s and has since dominated intellectual discussions and evaluations of economic change and political events in Guatemala. The roots of the class - dependency perspective lay in the nationalist / anti - U.S. discourse that emerged between 1944 and 1954, and was reasserted as a more penetrating critique of Guatemalan society during the 1960s through the communist Guatemalan Workers' Party, guerrilla organizations of the time period, and students and academics of the national university, all influenced by the Cuban revolutionary experience and reacting to the military dictatorship in Guatemala from 1963 to 1966. What was significant about the perspective was the critique it leveled against the behavior of the U.S. in the Central American region (and other regions of the world), with specific reference to the U.S. imperialist role in the 1954 counter - revolution against the elected presidency of Colonel Jacobo Arbenz, which destroyed the myth of U.S. benevolence that had underlain the modernization theory. Furthermore, as an early critique it revealed important linkages between the U.S. and Latin American military institutions and oligarchic elites, ending any pretense of a U.S. concern for "democratic change" in Central America generally. Later critiques from the perspective examined the distorting influence of imperialism on Guatemala in preserving a skewed distribution of wealth and land ownership, enhancing the repressive structures of the military and police, and maintaining socio - economic conditions advantageous to U.S. corporate investment. By the early 1970s the class - dependency perspective was supported by numerous scholars and observers within and outside of Guatemala from the disciplines of history, political science and sociology. What emerged from this multi - disciplinary approach was a radical critique and reassessment of all societal structures, including existing political parties, the military, landowning and industrial - financial elites, political representation and the effects of urban and rural capitalist expansion. Research from this perspective more than confirmed Central America's dependent status historically, documented the deterioration of peasant agriculture in favor of agro - export expansion and the repression of workers and progressive sectors, and supported the efforts of reformist and revolutionary organizations to advance substantive political and economic change. There is no doubt that the insights from the class - dependency perspective represented a significant intellectual advance in understanding not just Guatemalan society, but Central America generally. It continues to articulate important evaluations of social class dynamics and national political forces. It has been an invaluable perspective in turning scholarly attention towards specific economic structures in the region and the concomitant social and political conflict.

While the class - dependency perspective has varied from the rather crude application of Marxist categories and deterministic - imperialist models to more adaptive and explanatory theories of political and socio - economic change, there have been two important limitations of the perspective with respect to Guatemalan society. One limitation has been its treatment of the ethnic division, a characteristic unique in its dimensions to Guatemala. Another is found in its explanation of the military's relationship to the larger society, particularly the Maya majority. The tendency of the perspective has been to downplay the ethnic division by subsuming the Maya majority under other conceptual constructs, defining them as peasants or seasonal laborers, and emphasizing the "class conflict" over expressions of racism and ethnic conflict. Though references are often made to there being a Maya majority, little analysis or discussion until recently emphasized this ethnic division in the dominant Ladino ideology and political and social practices.

As a consequence, there was little speculation as to whether or not the ethnic division limited or complicated various efforts at collective action, i.e. unions, political parties, guerrilla organizations, and thus the possibilities for reformist or revolutionary change that appeared likely given the combination of a skewed distribution of wealth, land, and power backed through overt repression. With the ethnic division, though, and the separate concentrations of these ethnic groups across the national territory, I argue that the possibilities for mass - based reformist or revolutionary activity were significantly diminished due to the pervasive racist discourse on the Maya. Into the 1970s, ethnic identification and the resulting racism were still apparent throughout all levels of society, as Ladinos controlled all major political, economic and socio - cultural activities. The central chapters of the dissertation examine this theme.

An authoritarian - paternalism continued to dominate all Ladino discussions and practices towards the Maya, represented best by the composition of the military and its relationship to the Maya. While the Maya - Ladino relationship throughout this century had always been marked by coercive and repressive practices, punctuated by violent reprisals against certain rebellious communities, the main theme examined in the final chapters is the military's motives for dramatically escalating the level of repression in the Maya highlands in the late 1970s, followed by an indiscriminate assault against the Maya in the early 1980s, a form of state terror that was generalized across a vast northern zone. It was not only the fact that the Maya had borne the brunt of the military's violence in this period, but also a particularly vicious and indiscriminate form of military terror, that prompted my reexamination of events through an emphasis on the

Maya - Ladino relationship in an attempt to expand the scholarly discussion over what had occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

There is a continuing debate concerning what may or may not have occurred among the Maya communities of the northern highlands and whether there was minimal or broad - based support for the agenda of the guerrilla movement. Discussion on the violence of the period has focused on the Maya and the guerrilla movement in the region, attempting to determine the extent of Maya support for the revolutionary forces and the socio - economic conditions prior to the assault. In the dissertation I propose a change in the focus of the examination from the Maya to the Ladino state, and specifically the military's place in this larger set of structures. What I discuss early on is the important role of the military in defending a middle class and its nationalist development agenda after 1954. Throughout the 1960s the military expanded the scope of its activities into civic action and infrastructure development in the north. By the early 1970s, and in concert with an array of civilian political forces, the military began to elaborate grand strategies for a national economic transformation based on the northern highland and lowland regions. Such strategies entailed increasing contact with the Maya majority who resided within and next to a vast zone targeted for state - induced economic restructuring. As these plans were articulated, their potential determined, and a variety of international financing procured, the Maya highlands went from being considered a backward and undeveloped region to a vast expanse of territory that held the potential of dramatically altering the nation's economic future. Given these economic stakes and the intimate connections between the military and civilian sectors promoting the development agenda, the military was in the forefront of securing the northern territory. It was under these conditions, I argue, that the Maya and the guerrilla presence took on a heightened significance for the Ladino state, in which there was no direct threat to the established political order. The threat, rather, was to this economic agenda. In tracing out the dimensions of the Ladino state's agenda for northern Guatemala, I have attempted to ascertain why the military's violent assault was directed at certain regions over others, why it took place in the form that it did, and why it happened in this particular time period. In emphasizing the confluence of ethnic and economic factors, I believe it is possible to explain more fully the thinking and motives of the military as it violently imposed a permanent presence across northern Guatemala. What emerges is a distinctive account of how the Ladino state entered into a brutal assault against the Maya communities of northern Guatemala and the effects of the conflict at a regional and national level, up to 1985.

Chapter One of the dissertation is a review and assessment of the various anthropological and political theories that have been put forward in understanding Guatemalan society. Chapter

Two outlines the character of the Maya - Ladino relationship from the mid - 1800s to the 1950s. Chapter Three examines the rise of the middle class as a political force and the continuation of a nationalist - modernization agenda after 1954. Chapter Four focuses on the 1960s and highlights the uneven process of development by region, the emergence of the guerrilla movement, and the military as a dominant institution. Chapter Five outlines the preconditions to the violent assault against the Maya, analyzing the persistent forms of racism and the Ladino state's increasing preoccupation with the potential wealth of northern Guatemala. Chapter Six documents the dimensions of the Ladino state's agenda for northern Guatemala and the implementation of this development strategy, leading to the series of massacres by the early 1980s. In Chapter Seven, the Conclusion, I review the argumentation and evidence presented in the dissertation and its significance in understanding contemporary Guatemala. What the research in the dissertation reveals, I believe, is the character of the Maya - Ladino relationship and the precarious status the Maya peoples have had in relation to more powerful Ladino economic and political forces. Such relationships provide necessary insights into explaining the recent violent encounter between the military and the Maya.

Chapter One

The Maya as a Social Science Subject - "Eviscerating a People"

Guatemala is unique in the Central American isthmus because of the high percentage of this nation's population that remains defined as distinctively "Maya," in reference to them being direct descendants of the Maya - Quiché peoples who have lived in this region for thousands of years. To this day the Maya remain largely concentrated in the rural northwest, northeast, and the central - west region of Guatemala (or Maya highlands), and due to the persistence of their languages, dress, customs, values, and economic practices, they have been the subject of continuous anthropological research since the 1930s.[1] Of greatest significance to an understanding of Guatemalan society is the fact that they have remained a numerical majority (between 50% and 70%) in contrast to the other main ethnic group, the Ladinos. The Ladinos as an ethnic group represent a mix of peoples of European heritage that began emigrating to Guatemala after the initial Spanish conquest of the region during the 1500s. The predominant European influence has been from Spain due to the numerous centuries of direct administration by the Spanish monarchy, largely through the Catholic Church, since the conquest until Guatemalan independence in the mid-1800s. After independence this was followed by immigration from Germany and Italy in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The defining characteristics of the Ladinos are their use of Spanish as a first language, their concentration in urban centers, and their acceptance and propagation of "Western" values and styles. As has often been noted, this Ladino - Maya distinction is not based on pure blood types but has reflected a separation based on culture and history. Nevertheless, it is the Ladinos who have and continue to dominate all major sectors of the economy (agro-export production, banking, industry) and the state (bureaucracy, political parties, military, courts, congress, presidency), reflecting the most important aspect that separates these two groups, namely political and economic power. It is my position that such an ethnic differentiation in terms of geographical placement, language, values, ideology, economic advantages and political power has had a dramatic impact on the politics practiced at the national level and the direction of economic development in this nation. My thesis is that this ethnic dynamic underlies the ferocity and the extent of the military assault on the Maya highlands which took place between 1978 and 1985, continuing in a less violent form to this day. Given the fact that "ethnic" distinctions have been understood to play a significant role in the politics and history of all other regions of the world, this thesis might appear to be somewhat benign. It is a curious feature of the scholarship on Guatemalan politics and economy of this century, though deeply reliant on a historically based method of analysis, that it has consistently ignored or downplayed the ethnic dynamic in understanding contemporary Guatemalan society. In this chapter I will present a review of these various paradigms and how they have evolved over time, demonstrating how and why political analyses by both Guatemalan and North American observers have served to diminish the Ladino - Maya distinction. This has occurred at the expense of an understanding of the Maya peoples, the changes their communities have undergone, and the violence they have endured. In order to understand how the "ethnic question" (or as it has been more derogatorily referred to, as the "Indian problem") became separated from virtually all political analyses both within and outside of Guatemala, it is necessary to reflect on the earlier political and intellectual positions that arose during the 1944-54 decade of "revolution." This national experience will be shown to have shaped almost all later political theorizing about Guatemalan society.

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[1] See Appendix One and Appendix Two for maps of the national territory and the placement of the Maya peoples by linguistic group.

The resignation in 1954 of the elected president, Colonel Jacobo Arbenz, due to pressure from the United States and the installation of Colonel Castillo Armas, is acknowledged as a decisive turning point in contemporary Guatemalan history. As with most major events there is considerable debate as to the circumstances that precipitated this political change and the degree to which Guatemala was changed in the aftermath of this event. Even though the 1944-54 decade of "revolution" has undergone considerable reevaluation and reinterpretation in the last 15 years, it still represents a significant point of reference in which the important social and political gains made during this "ten years of spring" are contrasted with the persistence of military rule and intense phases of state violence initiated during the "counter-revolution" of the post - 1954 period up to the present.[2] What became established intellectually from this national experience was an enduring schism which may be defined as the "revolution / counter - revolution" dichotomy. This dichotomy is understood to still be active in the political arena at the national level between those forces who identify with the revolutionary ideals of the 1944-54 period, and those forces who identify with the aims of the "counter - revolution." As such, there is a certain degree of mythology regarding this period in which the political liberal - left identifies the revolutionary period as an era of considerable political - economic progress, and lost opportunities due to the malicious intervention of the United States. As a consequence, the post-54 period is viewed as the reassertion of American imperialism behind the most retrograde and reactionary of political -

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[2] See Jim Handy, Gift of the Devil. (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1984). Richard Immerman, The CIA in Guatemala. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982). Piero Gleijeses, Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944 -1954. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

economic forces in the country, leading to a renewed military - dictatorial state apparatus. In contrast, the political right views the revolutionary decade as a period of encroaching "communist" or totalitarian rule directed from the Soviet Union, and the political forces that brought about the "counter - revolution" are considered "liberationists" who freed Guatemala from the grips of a "communist terror." There is no doubt that this experience deeply traumatized and divided the national elite, and set in motion a persistent and violent conflict at the national level. It is my position though, that this "revolution / counter - revolution" dichotomy is a purely Ladino ideological construct, that reflects little the experiences of the Maya majority and an appreciation of the ethnic dynamic. As a consequence, by the 1970s when this dichotomy was broadened out into a more comprehensive "class - dependency" perspective and utilized for the study of Central America as a whole, a general understanding of Maya culture and economy in relation to Ladino dominance remained estranged from the overall theoretical paradigm. This aspect, as I will demonstrate in later chapters of my thesis, contributed to the present debate concerning the extreme violence against the Maya during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. The evolution of this theoretical estrangement from the Maya experience I will outline in this chapter.

Political Theory During the 1944 - 54 "Revolutionary" Experience

There are two important features concerning the inauguration of the 1944 - 54 decade of "revolution" that must be stressed. One is that it came about very quickly and did not involve a prolonged or violent struggle against the General Jorge Ubico dictatorship of thirteen years. The second is that it was an urban and Ladino phenomenon and almost wholly took place in the capital of Guatemala City, without involving the participation of either the rural Maya and Ladino populations that at the time were estimated to be about 70% to 80% of the total population. The political forces that eventually forced the resignation of General Ubico were largely comprised of progressive intellectuals and professionals such as students, teachers, lawyers, and small businessmen, inspired by the ideals of freedom expressed by the United States at the time during the struggle against European fascism. In the face of public protests in the capital, Ubico simply resigned and handed power over General Ponce Vaides.[3] General Ponce then attempted to perpetuate his own rule through a fraudulent election. It is highly likely that Ponce would have endured had not a sector of the military's officer class, disgruntled by the persistence of old generals, aligned itself with the small progressive movement in the capital and forced Ponce from power. A triumvirate, comprised of two officers and a civilian, then permitted national elections for the Congress and the Presidency from among the numerous parties that formed out of the earlier progressive movement. Confronted with the unity of the traditional conservative political forces, these liberal and reformist parties coalesced around the candidacy of Juan José Arévalo, a renowned Guatemalan scholar on education and philosophy. Arevalo won the presidency for a six year term.

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[3] On these events see Kenneth Grieb, "The Guatemalan Military and the Revolution of 1944," The Americas. Vol. XXXII (April, 1976) p. 524 - 543. Also Jim Handy (1984) and Piero Gleijeses (1991).

There was nothing particularly radical about Arévalo's presidency by Western liberal democratic standards. Arévalo, like most of the progressive Ladino elite, shared the view that Guatemalans were politically, culturally, and economically backward. This was due to the combined effects of prolonged dictatorship, the rural character of most of the population, and the Maya majority's linguistic and cultural marginalization from the Spanish and urban environment. As a consequence, there was a clear distinction made between the superiority of urban values and lifestyle over rural, and Spanish culture over Maya. In particular, the persistence of Maya culture was singled out for special denigration. Without any attempt on the part of the Guatemalan intellectual elite to understand the Maya's distinctive culture, the Maya were considered a significant blot on the "national identity." The resilience of the Maya traditions and cultures was considered a "national disgrace" and supposedly restricted, or acted as a brake on Guatemala's overall economic and social development. Except for those who simply pitied the Maya for their inability to become "civilized," there was no sympathetic voice that sought the protection or promotion of Maya culture, let alone their political equality and national representation. The "Indians" were considered "objects to be controlled" rather than subjects with any claims on the nation.[4] This assessment of the national condition very much influenced Arévalo's political agenda in which the priorities of the government were the establishment of liberal democratic institutions and the promotion of a general "enlightenment" through education. Arévalo advocated a philosophy he defined as "spiritual socialism" which basically emphasized progress through education and varying degrees of political participation depending on an individual's intellectual abilities. This was a "spiritual" and non-conflictual philosophy in contrast to the materialist and conflictual societal view of Marxist philosophy. Arevalo was thus, not a proponent of redistributive policies, but saw the government's role as promoter of the moral and intellectual life of the poorer classes. This environment, Arevalo believed, could best be accomplished through liberal democratic institutions. To this end, he oversaw an increase in the powers of the courts and Congress, supported a certain degree of worker unionization and political party activism (communist organizations remaining illegal), extended press freedoms, strengthened worker's rights, and attempted to universalize social security, health and education programs. Although Arévalo was elected by only literate males, the franchise was extended to include literate women (by secret ballot) and illiterate males (by public declaration).

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[4] See Richard Adams, "Ethnic Images and Strategies in 1944," in C. Smith, ed., Guatemalan Indians and the State. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990) p. 141 - 162.

Arévalo's progressive measures satisfied but a small core of supporters. The more organized worker's movements, and radical political party members, sought greater structural changes in the economy through state action against the domination of key sectors of the economy by U.S. corporations. At this time the United Fruit Co. totally controlled Guatemala's second largest export, including all the lands, the processing, the transportation, and the shipping and port facilities for the banana industry. UFCo also controlled all existing railway lines through its subsidiary International Railways of Central America (IRCA) and another U.S. company, Electric Bond and Share, controlled 75% of all electrical power production. Increasingly these U.S. corporations became the focus of Ladino labor and political party consternation as symbols representative of a weak national sovereignty. UFCo and IRCA became concerned that they were becoming the targets of the government as the courts sided with the grievances of the UFCo and IRCA workers. Most indignant, though, at these democratic changes was the traditional Ladino oligarchy. Lacking political party organizations to represent their interests effectively, and having no history of "politicking" in a competitive party environment, the Ladino oligarchy resorted to political intrigue, misinformation and allies within the military to stop or slow the extent of the reforms in progress.[5] In this initial "counter-revolutionary" project the oligarchy garnered the support of the conservative but influential Catholic Church hierarchy, the U.S. corporations in Guatemala, and gradually the U.S. government. With continued infighting among the political parties, a growing conservative backlash, and a largely complacent rural population, increasingly support from within the military became central to Arévalo staying in power. Arevalo fulfilled his term but it is clear that he left the presidency embittered by his experience with the landowning Ladino elite and disillusioned about the possibilities for lasting reforms in Guatemala.[6]

In the 1950 national elections, the political left and center-left were able to unite long enough to bring to power Colonel Jacobo Arbenz, a young and progressive military officer willing to extend reforms into the economic sphere by challenging the U.S. role in Guatemala's economy. These elections were the first to bring a broad agenda of proposals to the fore in which the rural countryside was more actively canvassed for support by contending presidential candidates. During the campaign Arbenz remained somewhat elusive about his plans for the country and because of this tactic he garnered support from diverse sectors of the population, and from within the Ladino elite.[7] In the rural countryside Ladino landowners of various sizes were adamantly opposed to the continuing progress advocated by the urban capital. There was certainly an ethnic and economic rationale to this opposition as the continuation of either democratization or modernization threatened to upset well established Ladino - Maya relations, then reflected in the gradual participation of the Maya behind various political banners in local elections. As such, rural Ladino landowners and municipal officials were concerned with Maya "politicization" generally, let alone with the possibility that the Maya majority might support a reformist agenda. The rural Ladinos thus acted to heighten reference to the ethnic dimension, a position forcibly backed by the conservative press and the rurally influential Catholic Church.

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[5] It is rumored that Arévalo was confronted with some 49 plots and coup attempts during his six years as president.

[6] See Jim Handy (1984) p. 113.

A question that must be examined in this context is how the Maya majority fit into this process of electoral competition and national political debate. The general assumption by recent political historians has been to suggest that the Maya were marginalized from this process because of their illiteracy, ignorance and traditions. Hence, if the Maya voted it was in line with the political preferences of the dominant local elite (whether Ladino or Maya), due to the strong local ties which hampered them in making an individual political choice.[8] What is known for certain is that the national political parties seldom sought support beyond the local elite in each community, preferring to deal directly with those local authorities who could "bring out the vote." What is often overlooked is the ethnically charged and hostile atmosphere the Maya were placed within at this time. A "Maya reluctance" would have been further ingrained due to the fact that the Maya had to register their vote through public declaration (which was extended only to illiterate males, and not illiterate females), and justified by their Spanish illiteracy. From the anthropological studies completed at the time it is clear that the Maya in general were cognizant of the debates and political events occurring in the national capital. What played a prominent role was the prevalent fear of local or national authorities. In this increasingly hostile atmosphere the Maya largely refrained, or were purposely marginalized, from the political debates and activities that dominated the urban centers. Although there was taking place in specific rural communities a growing division between Maya support for continued reforms and Ladino support for conservative conditions, the Maya remained either reserved or restricted in actively participating in politics beyond the local level. This left the ideological debates to be framed and fought out between contending Ladino parties and forces. This Maya response is not surprising. Up until 1952, the year in which Arbenz introduced an agrarian reform law and eight years after the fall of the dictatorship, the forces of progress still lacked any notable influence over the rural countryside. The police and military were still sympathetic or beholden to the influence of rural Ladino landholders. Although forms of debt bondage and Ubico's infamous "vagrancy laws" were legally abrogated, the traditional labor structures and the conditions of seasonal employment or share cropping had not changed at all. Given the heightened ethnic animosity of the landowners, the reactionary position of the Catholic Church as a whole, and the intransigence of the state security forces, the Maya were still entrapped within a set of social and economic relations that actively discriminated against their participation and organization as a people. As a consequence, the reforms in progress had brought no recognizable alteration to relations in the rural countryside, and the secret ballot allotted to the literate (and therefore the Ladino population) determined election results. In contrast, the Maya were confronted with a growing ethnic hatred that suggested an impending backlash, in which progressive forces in the capital were unwilling, due to their own perception of the Maya, to defend Maya culture or fight against the prevailing racism.

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[7] Arbenz campaigned on a "modernization" and nationalist plank without detailing the depth of these structural changes in the agrarian sector, although it was evident that some type of agrarian reform was forthcoming if Arbenz was elected. On the early approval of Arbenz by the U.S. see P. Gleijeses (1991) p. 81, 124 - 128.

[8] P. Gleijeses (1991) p. 14, 39, 45 - 46, 84. J. Handy (1984) p. 125 - 126. J. Handy observes that in several communities there was increased political activity leading to the election of indigenous mayors.

It was Arbenz, with the support of a small and loyal left coalition, who attempted to implement major structural changes within the economy. What is most important here about the Arbenz administration is the social and economic critique of their own society that was articulated, and the solutions that would arise from this socio - economic perspective. This critique established the premises from which all latter discussions on Guatemalan society would make reference. The assessment Arbenz and his coalition had of their country was that it was bound by two demeaning characteristics. One was a "semi-colonial status" due to the significant control by U.S. corporations over the nation's second largest export and the most important aspects of national infrastructure for all other forms of industrial or agricultural production e.g. the transportation and shipping of coffee. The second was the predominance of "pre-capitalist" or feudal structures in the countryside, characterized by the inefficient and underutilized lands (latifundia or plantation estates) of the landowners involved in coffee production while the rest of the rural population eked out a subsistence existence on small owned or rented plots. For

Arbenz, the goals of increased industrialization could only be achieved by first "modernizing" or "capitalizing" the agricultural sector, thus creating the conditions for an eventual industrialization. Hence, Arbenz's administration clearly outlined a linear and classical understanding of how "modernization" should take place.

Their assessment of Guatemala as a "feudal - colony" though, represented a direct attack on the two most powerful economic groups in the country, the U.S. corporations and the Ladino oligarchy, and state policies were initiated to confront these groups directly. Against the U.S. corporate monopoly, the Guatemalan state became important in building infrastructure (ports, highways) to compete with the entrenched U.S. control over these vital sectors. Secondly, and most important was the Agrarian Reform Law (Decree 900) implemented by Arbenz in 1952. This was mainly directed at the landowning structure of the Ladino oligarchy, but did not exempt the vast landholdings for banana production retained by the UFCo. The reform law introduced consisted of expropriating those lands held in large family estates or companies that were uncultivated or under-utilized. The former owners would be compensated through government issued bonds with interest, and then these lands were to be allotted through usufruct (the state not allowing resale) in smaller plots to the rural landless or marginal producers. The distribution of these confiscated lands was to be handled at the local level by local organizations whose creation was promoted by the government. Credit, financing and technical training was then extended through these locally organized associations by government institutions. This feature of Arbenz's reform program, more than any other, appears to have motivated the U.S. government to implement a campaign to overthrow Arbenz before he ended his term. Local organizations, fostered and backed by the Arbenz government, posed a particular problem to the U.S. and other conservative forces who up until this point had maintained some faith in arresting this "radical" administration through elections.[9] The agrarian reform program threatened to deeply entrench massive popular support for the government and continued "nationalist" development if it succeeded.

It is this land reform program, more than any other aspect of the Arbenz regime, that has undergone considerable scrutiny and revision. On the political and intellectual left within Guatemala, the reform program is pointed to as the defining characteristic of Arbenz's administration as a simply "petty bourgeois" or urban - nationalist, middle - class movement, wholly capitalistic in nature with no greater vision that the development of an advanced capitalist society. This critique emphasizes the fact that rural collectivization, expropriation without indemnification, and state control over marketing and distribution were not pursued. This reflected a liberal economic approach rather than a true socialist approach to resolving the agrarian question. Instead, the cornerstones of the reform program were state loans, small scale surplus production and individual profits, encouraged by the government and inevitably maintaining a rural and urban class division. More recently, historians have suggested that this is not a fair appraisal and that given the hostile Cold War environment, the prevailing economic conditions in the countryside, and the internal sensitivity of the elite to "Communism," Decree 900 represented a significant and radical departure both politically and economically.[10] Politically, if the reform program had been allowed to be fully implemented, it would have integrated the rural countryside with the urban centers, strengthening the overall state structure. The creation of locally organized committees to oversee numerous aspects of the agrarian reform would have been a source of continued politicization, rural social improvement, and democratization, breaking the stranglehold of the landowning oligarchy over rural politics. Using economic criteria, considerable stress is placed on the fact that in the two years in which the reforms were in effect, over 100,000 landless families (or some 1/2 million people) benefited from the redistribution, surpluses were produced, loans were quickly repaid, and the traditional abysmal wages as a seasonal laborer rose significantly due to labor scarcity and organization. In this view, the measure of the reform program's success was the degree to which it did not affect adversely either agro-export or subsistence production, and that it was being implemented with a low degree of rural violence and retribution.

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[9] Part of the problem for the U.S. was the divided nature of the political right, a right that both benefitted from, and supported Arbenz's nationalist and protectionist policies but were wary of "communist" influences.

Although there remains an ongoing debate surrounding the strengths and limitations of the reform program and how it was implemented, it is a curious feature that very little debate surrounds the actual "ethnic" content of the program (such as the ethnic composition of the beneficiaries), or the specific departments in Guatemala that were most or least effected by the agrarian reform program. The one early explanation that touches on this issue also suggests that there was a strong political limitation as to where the reform program was implemented:

> The Departments where they gave the most number and most extensive redistributions were Izabal (40.4%), Escuintla (32.2%), Quiché (25.4%), and Alta Verapaz (18.2%); undoubtedly zones of a great concentration of property but not of a great concentration of the population. As is logical in an agrarian reform directed from above and not by the actions of the masses, the problems began to resolve themselves where they were most easy, or in other words, where the finca owners, by the extensiveness of their lands, were least able to defend

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[10] See Piero Gleijeses (1991) and Jim Handy (1984).

> themselves from a moral, economic and political point of view. In the East the reform hardly operated ... [11]

As observed by Monteforte Toledo, these numbers demonstrate that the departments that underwent the largest land redistribution were Ladino areas and principally where the land holdings of the UFCo were located, in the departments of Escuintla and Izabal. The department of Alta Verapaz was also a relatively easy area in which to enforce the land reform program as the government already had in its control the vast coffee estates that had formerly been expropriated from German immigrants during the Ubico dictatorship, at the behest of the United States. The departments of Alta Verapaz and El Quiché had Maya majorities, but as Monteforte Toledo notes, a relatively sparse population in comparison to the total land area. What this reflects was the fact that the Maya dominated areas were not as affected by the reforms because of the low number of large estates in the Maya regions generally. In order for the Maya communities to benefit substantially from the land reform program they would have had to move in large numbers into the Ladino areas and likely force a considerably greater degree of expropriation. Thus, it could be argued that the real disruptive and ethnically hostile features of the agrarian reform were still to be confronted, and that at the time the low degree of rural violence was due to the fact that by 1954 only a small percentage of the Maya had been direct beneficiaries of the land reform program. As Monteforte Toledo also has noted, the reforms to a high degree were directed from above, and reflected little the input or demands of the masses, or in other words, the Maya majority. There is thus room to speculate that had the Maya themselves had a direct input into this discussion and implementation, the reform program may have constituted less a "capitalist - modernizing" agenda and more a defense of existing Maya communal lands (community controlled for common usage) and an expansion of this ideal, and would have replicated the *ejido* land reform program underway at the same time in Mexico.

Since the theoretical framework of the Arbenz administration held no special insights into the history of ethnic relations, nor did the government ever believe it was conceivable that the state should directly defend or promote the Maya culture, the Arbenz government remained trapped within the same liberal economic thinking that had captivated the minds of the Ladino elite in the late 1800s. To a high degree the Arbenz government was limited politically by its own economic theory. On the one hand the government had centralized power in order to push through a nationalist and modernizing program. On the other hand it refrained from politicizing or involving those Maya "masses" whose eventual support would be critical to the success of both the reform program and the continuing political project of the Ladino reformers. This limitation becomes apparent when it is remembered that in this time period, hostile regional and U.S. forces were applying more pressures upon the Arbenz government and the conservative right was becoming more unified and emboldened by this external threat. Such a process of politically integrating the Maya into a larger political movement would have entailed a recognition of the "Maya character" of Guatemala, and brought the government to confront directly the ethnic division in society. This level of political will did not exist in the government, as it did not flow from its own economic and social theory. The Arbenz administration held to the one extreme of liberal economic thinking, that being a nationalist, protectionist, and developmentalist project, and this was only radical to the extent that it did not confront the entrenched and dominant ideology of Ladino superiority over Maya. Due to the U.S. intervention, what became paramount in all future debates was not the ethnic nor radical deficiencies of the Arbenz economic program, but the limits to any national reforms imposed by U.S. prerogatives in the region. With the fall of the Arbenz administration, the liberal to radical Ladino elite of Guatemala looked outward for the causes and continuation of Guatemala's "feudal - semi-colonial" status. As a result, when a broader "class - dependency" perspective began to emerge in the 1960s the fate of the Arbenz regime became an important and recent demonstration of the limits imposed by U.S. imperialism, the prevalence of a double standard within the Americas, and the U.S. preference for military dictatorships in protecting U.S. corporate and strategic interests in the world.

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[11] Mario Monteforte Toledo, Guatemala: Monografía Sociológica. (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autonoma De Mexico, 2ed., 1965), 434 - 435. For a more recent and indepth discussion of change in the rural countryside in this period, see Jim Handy, Revolution In the Countryside. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

In retrospect, it is clear that the Arévalo - Arbenz era represented a significant theoretical and practical advance over the earlier periods of personalized dictatorship, and that the hostile U.S. reaction and direct role in overthrowing Arbenz came as a real shock to all the progressive political forces in Guatemala. This imperialist limitation did not just affect the small radical left movement in Guatemala, but chastened all progressive Ladino sectors including those within the business elite, the military, and the liberal political parties. For these sectors this era had begun to fulfill either their democratic or national - development aspirations. Their sentiment was that even if the Arbenz administration had been influenced by "communist" elements, it was still an issue to be resolved by Guatemalans and not by the U.S. Since this national experience, these progressive sectors have been extremely cognizant of the U.S. role and influence in their country, and of those retrograde forces backed and strengthened through U.S. support since 1954.

In relation to the Maya majority during this period of "revolution" we may outline a few different conclusions. At a theoretical level neither Arévalo nor Arbenz articulated a political philosophy that recognized the indigenous content of the nation. This was a reflection of both the prevailing and discriminatory Ladino attitude towards "all things Maya," and the Maya peoples' own remoteness from the political changes in the Ladino urban centers. At a practical or policy level, the reforms of both administrations did not advance to the point where the general Ladino domination over Maya was ever threatened. Although Arbenz's agrarian reform program definitely had the potential of forcing this issue into the political sphere, the U.S. intervention in 1954 circumvented the possibility of this debate ever arising. Hence, the "ethnic question" or the various dimensions of Ladino domination did not become an issue within the modernizing agenda of Arbenz, again a reflection of the negligible degree of Maya participation in the "revolution" and in the national programs that were implemented. As a result, the decade of "revolution" left a deeply entrenched theoretical legacy that was bereft of a political discourse on "ethnic relations" or the Maya in Guatemalan society. What emerged from this national experience was a perspective that focused squarely on the continuing U.S. imperialist role in Guatemala.[12]

The Maya and Anthropological Theory

The Maya of Guatemala became an important focus of anthropological study during the 1940s and these studies have continued in various forms up to the present. It might be assumed that this long tradition of anthropological interest and in-depth study would have established a strong counter - paradigm, or an alternative political discourse concerning the composition of Guatemalan society and its history of discriminatory ethnic relations. Instead, the strongest anthropological tradition has been a powerful defense of Ladino society and values, and the perpetuation of Ladino domination in all spheres of Guatemalan society, despite the significance of the Maya culture as the subject of investigation. The paradigm through which the Maya have generally been studied and understood has denied, as a premise, the existence of a specific "Maya collectivity" in contrast or opposed to the Ladino collectivity, even though the Ladinos and the Maya have each been highly cognizant of their own identity in terms of their difference to the other prevailing culture.[13] Anthropology has tended, either unwittingly or openly, to support the prevailing denigration of Maya culture, and this has been reflected most clearly in the discussions and observations on ethnic relations in Guatemala. On this issue, the main argument advanced for a considerable period of time by anthropologists was that this ethnic difference was not a biological difference based on pure blood types or readily apparent physical differences; hence the prevailing "racism" was not a *biologically justified* racism. Rather, Guatemala was typified by an ethnic differentiation based on history and culture (the Spanish conquest, language, customs, attire). The nature of this latter differentiation was considered a form of ethnic separateness that was readily mutable and would not pose significant problems to the Maya becoming fully integrated within the dominant Ladino society, even though the Ladinos were the strongest proponents of an ethnic differentiation based on racial typologies. This was a curious assessment by anthropology given that this "process of integration" was not yet visibly apparent in the first half of this century, and the fact that these two cultures had already lived side by side for over 400 years. There was also an important division between what the Ladinos believed the nature of the Maya - Ladino relationship to be, and what was the anthropologists' own theory of this relationship. In consensus with the dominant Ladino social views, anthropology denied the Maya a collective status and identity, and thus failed to develop a political discourse surrounding this ethnic distinction. This deficiency, I will argue, served to further marginalize the anthropological perspective from the political - historical analyses on contemporary Guatemala.

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[12] See Manuel Galich, Por Qué Lucha Guatemala, Arévalo and Arbenz: dos hombres contra un imperio. (Buenos Aires: Elmer Editor, 1956). Juan José Arévalo, Guatemala: La Democracia y El Imperio, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Palestra, 1964). Juan José Arévalo, The Shark and the Sardines. trans. by J. Cobb and Dr. R. Osegueda (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1961). Luis Cardoza y Aragón, "Guatemala: 1954 - 1964, Diez Años De 'Gloriosa Victoria'," in Cuadernos Americanos. 135, 4 (1964) p. 16 - 33.

Throughout most of this century the predominant approach to the study of the Maya has been an "integrationist" perspective, a perspective which has had a wide currency within the North American academic literature and at the national level in Guatemala (as "state ideology" within some Ladino academic and governmental circles).[14] As will be more clearly demonstrated later, this integrationist perspective was part and parcel of the broader theory of "modernization" that dominated the development literature and Third World studies during the 1940s, 50s, and 60s. It is important to critique this perspective since for many decades the assumptions implicit in this paradigm structured the type of questions that were investigated, and constructed a specific conception of native life and what it was to become. Although it is less influential today within the academic literature, this paradigm nevertheless represents the most "liberal" or progressive position of Ladino society towards the native majority within Guatemala at present. Thus, it holds important implications in terms of state policy and for understanding ongoing debates about the future of this nation. A fuller comprehension of this integrationist approach is crucial as it is the only conception of the "Maya in Guatemala" that sustains the notion of an "indian problem," while refusing to speculate about the implications of a "dominated cultural majority" either politically, socially, or economically.[15] Hence, it is my position that this integrationist perspective radically simplified twentieth-century Maya peoples and altogether misunderstood, or failed to recognize, the real dynamics of change and conflict in Guatemalan society. By denying the existence and identity of a "Maya collective" within their research and theorizing, scholars utilizing an integrationist paradigm automatically denied applying a Western "majoritarian" perspective to evaluating the governing political, social and economic values of the day. Given the obvious diversity among native communities (linguistically, culturally) and the apparent parochial and localized nature of beliefs and politics, this initial premise is not surprising. This paradigm assumed much more, though, and consequently a specific political discourse never arose alongside the research on the Maya peoples.

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[13] For the views of Ladino scholars on the Maya in the first part of this century, see Miguel Angel Asturias, Guatemalan Sociology: The Social Problem of the Indian. trans. by M. Ahern (Tempe: Arizona State University, 1977), first published in 1923; and J. Handy (1984) p. 91 - 92.

[14] See, for example, Jorge Luis Arriola, ed., Integración Social en Guatemala. (Guatemala: 1956). Other terms utilized with similar assumptions have been "acculturation," "assimilation" and "Ladinoization."

This integrationist perspective put a great emphasis on "cultural attributes" and how they differed between native communities and in contrast to Ladino society. A considerable amount of time was expended on trying to understand why natives retained specific "beliefs and habits" and had not readily accepted the Western values and beliefs of the urban Ladinos. There is no sense or discussion of natives as rightful political actors in determining their own affairs (let alone those of the Ladino minority), or as purposely retaining their "cultural attributes" against Ladino society. Further, there is a strong tendency to disregard native hostility and attribute native oppression, poverty and increasing immiseration to either the persistence of native beliefs and culture or the incomplete process of modernization and integration (which will inevitably occur). The integrity, complexity and self - sustaining nature of the native economy is denied in favor of emphasizing the degree to which various communities have become assimilated within the national economy and have adopted Ladino social behavior (which is seen as a positive factor). The expansion of the Ladino national economy is never brought into question, nor the means and methods that are employed either politically, legally, or economically in this modernizing process. In fact, the motives and consequences of Ladino society towards the Maya are rarely considered from a critical and/or historical approach. Rather, a generally ahistorical and non - critical approach is adhered to within the larger paradigm of modernization (generally perceived as a nonconflictual and apolitical process). The problem is that neither the assumptions nor conclusions drawn within this paradigm, concerning either the Maya or the Ladino (and their relationship) and the direction of Guatemalan society, had any basis in what was actually taking place. This liberal and benign perspective on social change and Maya - Ladino relations in Guatemala was largely an imposed view and though dominant within North American academia, it had only the smallest following within Guatemalan intellectual and political circles at the time. These criticisms will be substantiated in the review that follows.

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[15] Neither a more progressive nor conservative / racist view on the Maya in Guatemala would conceive of the natives as a social "problem." A more progressive account could accept native government and the preservation of the native economy and culture. Conservative or racist opinions would range from the extremely paternalistic to neglect, thus allowing the persistence of native culture while rejecting any idea of natives as capable of becoming an integral and active part of the nation.

In order to understand the underlying assumptions of this integrationist perspective, we must return to and reexamine the criteria that governed the most important studies of the Maya in Guatemala. The dominant position that would guide anthropological research throughout most of this century was advanced by Sol Tax during the 1930s.[16] Tax's position is clear and uncompromising. Through an initial discussion of linguistic divisions and ethnic units he argued that ethnographic research based on linguistic groupings (Quiché, Mam, Cakchiquel, etc.) was confusing to the point of being useless, since even natives of the same "dialect" were not organized into social groups nor shared a common "culture." For Tax, the 'municipios' (defined as territorial administrative divisions recognized in all governmental matters) were the "basic ethnic divisions and cultural groups into which the country is divided."[17] The municipios he further divided into three types, "vacant-town" (population lives in countryside), "town-nucleus" (population resides in town) and a combination of these two types where roughly half had residents in town, and half maintained residents in the countryside. Tax then defined the inhabitants as "Indian," "Ladino" or "foreign Indians," distinctions that were based on language and culture rather than "physical type." Indians "speak Indian languages, wear Indian costumes, have Indian surnames, and live like Indians."[18] A Ladino speaks Spanish, has a Spanish surname, wears European-type clothes, "wears shoes, lives in a house with windows, is usually literate, and has, in general, a better standard of living than his Indian neighbor."[19] "Foreign

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[16] Sol Tax, "The Municipios of the Midwestern Highlands of Guatemala," American Anthropologist. 39 (1937), p. 423 - 444.
[17] Ibid., p. 425.
[18] Ibid., p. 432.
[19] Ibid., p. 432.

Indians" were those native to one town but had migrated to another (while retaining their language and costume). Tax defined the municipios as "social units" since "[F]rom the point of view of the Indians themselves, the people of each municipio constitute a unique group, united by blood and tradition and differing from all others in history, language, and culture."[20] There were exceptional cases (two municipios sharing similar social and cultural features) but generally each municipio could be considered a "discrete unit."

> That the belief has its counterpart in objective fact is very clear: the municipios do differ in language, obviously in their saints, their names and their costumes, probably also to some extent in physical type. They are, moreover, conscious of their unity and their uniqueness: they disapprove of marriage outside the municipio; when they travel they consider themselves strangers on foreign shores and think of a person from the home municipio as a "countryman," and if a colony is established in another municipio the people of the colony keep up their home customs and mix only so far as is necessary with the local Indians.[21]

Tax further gives examples of how the natives identify themselves by name with their municipio (not as Guatemalans), how dress varies according to municipio, and the way languages vary between municipios. Under his discussion of the municipios as "cultural units," Tax cites the specialization of production from various regions (geography alone not accounting for a given productive activity), the differences in technology and economics, the differing trend of their "cultural interests," the variance in standards of living, localized religious practices (peculiar combinations of the secular and sacred), and variations on political appointment and service, as further evidence to support his argument. As Tax concludes, "enough has been said about municipios as self-conscious social and cultural independent groups to show that progress in the study of Guatemalan ethnology depends upon a prior recognition of the municipios as the primary (and possibly final) ethnic units in which it is involved."[22]

Although Tax's logic and observations may seem circular ("Indians live like Indians") and descriptively simplistic, they do seem appropriate given the obvious diversity displayed by the Maya and the seemingly parochial native perspective. It must be remembered that the research of Tax and others had only just begun in earnest and was directed towards building a considerable body of information from municipio to municipio, perhaps later making possible broader generalizations and regional comparisons. Nevertheless, Tax's insistence on recording diversity at every level within a municipio consequently denies recording a common and collective native experience (either as "Maya" or as "Quiché," "Mam," etc.), particularly in relation to Ladino society and government. Also, this municipio perspective limits the possibility of examining the native economy and culture as an integrated whole (as native economic behavior is considered a distinct "cultural attribute" at the municipio level) and as an important reason behind the preservation and persistence of native life.

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[20] Ibid., p. 433.
[21] Ibid., p. 433.
[22] Ibid., p. 444.

As such, Tax's article outlining a methodology for further research does not outline for us the broader perspective on Guatemalan society which he and other anthropologists were working within, but this was more fully drawn out in later articles. Generally they adhered to a two tier hierarchy that pitted a comparison of the "civilized" (urban, secular, literate Ladino society) against the "primitive" Indians (rural, illiterate, religious) through a quasi-scientific and comparative evaluation. In two separate articles, Tax advanced the view that the "indians" (never the "Maya") of Guatemala represented a somewhat anomalous combination. On the one hand these Indians had a "primitive" world view or mental apprehension of reality. Like "classical" primitives their minds were "clouded" with animism, the physical world was anthropomorphized, they practiced sorcery, were superstitious, and ascribed special powers to people and things.[23] On the other hand their social relations were of the "civilized type" since "[I]n their social, economic, political, and even religious interrelations these people are in significant degree practical, matter - of - fact, mundane, and secular minded."[24] For Tax the perplexing aspect of this was the fact that the Indians generally were in close proximity or had contact with their "civilized" Ladino counterpart. In his other article he states that the Maya are "as unworldly as the most isolated of primitive peoples" and that their "methods of agriculture, their food, clothes, utensils and their mode of life, as well as their beliefs concerning nature and the supernatural, bear next to no relation to their proximity to the influences of civilization."[25] The persistence of this "culture" was attributed to the fact that they were "uneducated, ignorant and unworldly, the newspapers, the telegraph and the telephone, not to mention the ideas entertained by the urbanized Ladinos, mean next to nothing to them; and if their contact with these things is physical, it is not actual."[26] Despite their secular economic, social, political and religious activities, which Tax commended for being impersonal, and offering mobility and free choice, the natives were not fully "civilized." In both articles Tax foresaw education and literacy in Spanish as the means to rectify this discrepancy, implying that the natives would then voluntarily abandon their "culturally primitive" habits in favor of the "civilized Ladino worldview."

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[23] Sol Tax, "World View and Social Relations in Guatemala," American Anthropologist. Vol. XLIII (1941) p. 27 - 42. Reprinted in Contemporary Cultures and Societies of Latin America. eds. Dwight Heath and Richard Adams, (Toronto: Random House, 1965) p. 496 - 497.

[24] Ibid., p. 498 - 499.

[25] Sol Tax, "Culture and Civilization In Guatemalan Societies," The Scientific Monthly. Vol. 48 (May, 1939) p. 465 - 466.

[26] Ibid., p. 466.

Tax's perspective should not be viewed as anomalous or atypical, but as a generally accepted intellectual paradigm within North American scholarship. It should be noted that the use of the dichotomies, such as primitive versus civilized, has been the subject of considerable criticism in the various social science fields which employed these classificatory schemes and comparative evaluations, whether it be in anthropology or in the "modernization" school that dominated political science and sociology. What is important to emphasize though is that this manner of evaluation and comparison most often tended to be ahistorical and uncritical. Though stressing "objectivity and neutrality," these evaluations leveled a heavy judgment against those peoples, relationships, or views defined as "uncivilized." In the case of Guatemala, such a perspective established the Ladino political and economic elite as a standard of "civilization," disregarding the history of means employed to achieve this standard (forced expropriation of native lands, coerced native labor publicly and privately).[27] This perspective also refused to make a judgment on the continual abuse, and totally absolved the Ladino elites of complicity in creating and maintaining the condition of the native peoples. The combination of an incomplete process of "modernization" or the persistence of "native attitudes and culture" forms the basis for explaining economic and social problems, and justifies the "integrationist" perspective and state policies and actions. Either explanation forgives and extols the behavior of the dominant elite despite a lack of evidence, such as actual state policy, to substantiate such an appraisal.

The logic of this paradigm was more fully laid out by Tax in a later article. The full implications of this anthropological perspective were most apparent in the discussions concerning ethnic relations between the Ladinos and the Indians of Guatemala. In an important debate in the early 1940s through the journal America Indígena, Sol Tax and Robert Redfield established quite clearly their assumptions about Guatemalan society generally and the "Indians" in particular. Tax initiated the debate when he wrote a response to the published research of Dr. Morris Siegel.[28] Siegel had done field research in San Miguel Acatán in the department of Huehuetenango. Siegel had concluded that a concept of "white racial superiority" underlay all social relations in Guatemala, in which the Indians represented an "inferior species of mankind" and where "the mass of the white population seems firmly convinced that Indians are, in truth, biologically inferior and consequently deserving of the lower position in life."[29] Siegel further stated that the "white group" still was asserting its "superior social status (by virtue of blood heritage), thus implementing the wholly palatable and convenient philosophy of conquest and 'right to rule'" without which the "small white group would have been rapidly ingested by the preponderating Indian population."[30] Tax took exception to this view of ethnic relations in Guatemala and saw it as a "stereotyped picture" of the evolution of race relations in which the "criterion of class and status remains the biological origin of its members."[31] For Tax, in most of Guatemala, the distinctions between Ladinos and Indians could not be based on criteria of "race" (even though the Ladinos may believe this) and hence, there was the danger of attributing to Guatemala a "race problem" that did not exist. Since an Indian who lost his Indian characteristics was considered "Ladino," the criteria of "race" was cultural rather than biological. Then, in a rather surprising summation for an expert on "Indians" in Guatemala, Tax stated his position on the natives and on Guatemala generally.

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[27] Today it would be almost impossible to get the same type of evaluation of the Ladino elite except in a Guatemalan newspaper.

[28] Sol Tax, "Ethnic Relations In Guatemala," America Indígena. Vol. II, No. 4 (Octubre, 1942) p. 43 - 48.

> This does not mean that Ladinos do not look down upon Indians; there is no doubt that they do. They sometimes speak of them, in their manifestation of group prejudice, as stupid and dirty and use the term 'indio' in a derogatory sense. ***This kind of devaluation is not, however, important, and appears to have few and minor social consequences.*** The attitude of Ladinos is quite clearly not that Indians are incapable of becoming educated or of becoming cleaner in their habits or of adopting anything else that the Ladinos think of as characteristic of their culture. ***On the contrary Ladino attitudes and actions, including those of the government officials themselves, are predicated on the belief that the Indians can (and should) become Ladinos.***[32]

Despite the evidence at the time, both historical and sociological, contrary to the two statements I have placed in italics, Tax proceeded to suggest that it is only coincidental that the Indians are the worst off economically, educationally, and in terms of health care. He stated that they are not "under legal handicaps, but often their ignorance and poverty prevent them from taking advantage of their legal rights" and that Indians "as such are not exploited economically, although again their poverty and lack of education makes it more necessary for them than for Ladinos to work for others as common laborers."[33] For Tax, what separated the Indian from not being "born equal" to the Ladino was language, as Spanish was and is the official language of education, media, and legal procedures.

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[29] Ibid., p. 43.
[30] Ibid., p. 43 - 44.
[31] Ibid., p. 44.
[32] Ibid., p. 46. (Italics my own.)
[33] Ibid., p. 46.

Tax also believed that the "Indianist" position was a combination of "sentimentality" and "social goals." The ends of maintaining Indian culture while improving health, education, and economic conditions were for Tax incompatible, as "the material and mental improvement of the Indian will increase the tempo of the process of Ladinoization that is always going on, hence the loss to Indian society of more and more people and its possible disappearance."[34] Consequently the "Indian problem" for Tax was only part of the larger social problems related to modernization. Once the nation had become developed, the "Indian problem" (and the Indian) would largely disappear.

In an important rebuttal to Tax's position, John Collier (Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D.C.) noted that Tax's position seemed contrary to Tax's own empirical evidence and that of other researchers, as well as to the United States experience in relation to U.S. Indians. Colliers point was that an "assimilationist" policy simply does not work. Collier emphasized a significant aspect of Tax's position and related it to the U.S. experience.

> Underlying the rather puzzling thesis of Sol Tax's article there seems to be an unexpressed thought that if countries recognize the strength of their Indians and the peculiarities of their capacities and needs, the effect is going to be to upset these countries and set in motion conflicts involving racial prejudice. ... It is the kind of thought which a generation ago, and less than that, to a large extent controlled the social reactions of most anthropologists in the United States, when matters of practical Indian need and welfare came up. And having this view, the anthropologists in the United States, with very few exceptions, perseveringly disassociated themselves from efforts by white people to help Indians or by Indians to help themselves.[35]

Collier adamantly felt Tax's position was an affront to what the Inter-American Indian Institute stood for, and contradicted the thesis of the treaties (between nations) which had established the institute. Collier concluded his statement by noting that Tax's article would seem to many to be a "throw-back to an unrealism concerning the Indian, usual in generations gone by, but not usual now."[36] In a reply to Collier the anthropologist, Robert Redfield, renowned for his work on Guatemala and Mexico, thoroughly defended Tax's perspective and reiterated that whatever educational policy was adopted (either in the U.S. or in Guatemala) it seemed arguable that in the long run assimilation to the dominant group was inevitable.[37] For Collier, this was a denial of the values and power of Indian culture, and thus a denial of the "Indian factor" in Guatemala.[38] Collier felt that native culture could be a real asset and benefit to "nation building," but neither anthropologist in this debate seemed able or willing to envision such a process and outcome.

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[34] Ibid., p. 46.

[35] John Collier, "Comment," attached to Ibid., p. 47 - 48.

[36] Ibid., p. 48.

[37] R. Redfield, J. Collier, E.J. Sady and C.C. Presnall, "Comment on Dr. Tax's Article," America Indígena. Vol. III, No. 1 (Enero, 1943) p. 83 - 85.

Although this debate was both brief and polite, it highlighted a significant and early division regarding the interpretation of research and what should be considered the most important or best future outcome for the native population of Guatemala and natives in general. Unfortunately, the issue of Siegel's claims did not take center stage, leading possibly to an early and warranted critique of Ladino elite priorities and their treatment of the natives of Guatemala. What was brought out was a division between the native specialists, with their faith in modernization and assimilation (future progress), and a "sentimental Indianist" position which believed that practical ends could be established and achieved by valuing and enhancing native culture. As one "Indianist" in this debate noted politely, "the anthropologists have little experience upon which to base their prophesies of the disintegration of Indian society either as a natural or desirable result of cultural contact."[39] Sady rightly adds that:

> Perhaps underlying more basically this interesting controversy are different attitudes, one tending to explain the status quo without evaluating it in terms of social justice, the other recognizing certain values of Indian culture, the need for protection of peoples within it from exploitation by the dominant group, and the effectiveness of special methods in bringing this about.[40]

Reflecting on Tax's position at the time that this debate took place, even the "Indianists'" criticisms may be considered an understatement. The Ubico dictatorship of the day was openly and adamantly opposed to educating the populace, used legislation to force the natives to labor for the state and Ladino landowners, and backed Ladinos in extending their claims over native lands. Tax's and Redfield's position can only be understood if we remember that the "modernization" paradigm tended also to forgive the persistence of military dictatorships, emphasized social stability and public order against 'radical change,' and generally held that the conditions (cultural and attitudinal) for building democratic institutions were absent in many Latin American and Third World countries.[41] Within this paradigm of progress and future ends, the majority native population of Guatemala was singled out as the "Indian problem," who only served to exacerbate the problem of modernization, democracy, and the concomitant betterment of the general population.

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[38] Ibid., p. 86. Although the debate had limited participation, only the anthropologists held fast to an assimilationist position.

[39] Emil J. Sady, Ibid., p. 88.

[40] Ibid., p. 88.

[41] This position Dr. Tax upholds in his article "The Problem of Democracy In Middle America," American Sociological Review. Vol. 10, No. 2 (April, 1945) p. 192 - 199.

This anthropological paradigm was not the only approach, though, to examine the Maya from an integrationist or assimilationist perspective that foresaw the eventual demise of the "primitive" ways of the natives. In fact, John Gillin, a noted researcher on acculturation and ethnic relations in Guatemala, felt that a "functionalist" view in cultural studies could facilitate this process.[42] Using his research from the town of San Luis Jilotepeque, Jalapa, in eastern Guatemala in which more than two-thirds of the population was "Indian" and the rest Ladino, Gillin posed the question as to why the Ladino culture had not long ago absorbed or extinquished the native customs. Applying a general behavior theory (more easily explained as a simple utilitarian scheme of pain and pleasure) he argued that the varying applications of punishment or reward by Ladino culture on the natives either prevented or facilitated the adoption of Ladino culture. Gillin believed that through this formulation it would be possible "to predict the changes in conditions necessary to effect full acculturation of Indians or of Ladinos" and that cultural "planning" or "engineering" was a theoretical and practical possibility.[43] Despite Gillin's apparent openness as to who assimilates who in this article, his assessment of the native peoples and how Ladino society impacts on them is startlingly revealed in a later article, in reference to the very same community.[44]

> Although the Ladinos or mestizos claim and obtain superior rewards in money, landownership, political power, and certain aspects, of social prestige and etiquette, their activities are ***not injurious to the satisfaction of the basic animal drives*** of the Indians. The Ladinos do not ***as a rule*** inflict pain, starvation, and other forms of severe punishment upon the Indians.[45]

Such assessments of a community, particularly one with a native majority, provide a fairly clear idea as to how the researcher perceived those peoples and the situation he studied. Fortunately, Gillin provided a wealth of empirical and descriptive information that lends itself to supporting and advancing alternative accounts of Ladino - Maya relations and Maya life in general.

I have put forward the above discussion to demonstrate the assumptions and perspective of the major academics doing research on Guatemalan natives earlier in this century. As I have attempted to illustrate, there was little if any overt support or value placed in the 'native culture' other than its documentation. Whether this was considered a 'value-free and objective' (scientific) position, it served to justify the continual domination and expansion of Ladino society at the expense of the Maya. With respect to this point, and what I view as the most damaging aspect of this anthropological approach, is that this paradigm neglected or perceived as outside their research domain the historical and ongoing relationship between the Guatemalan state, the national economy, and the Mayan peoples as a whole. Without a recognition and examination of this relationship, there is no understanding of the Maya peoples as a 'collectivity' (other than defined as "culturally distinct" with all its implicit derogatory connotations within a modernization and integrationist perspective) and as "political" subjects (in the sense of having "citizenship" or being recognized as "citizens" with a legitimate claim in determining their own destiny and that of the future of the nation).

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[42] John Gillin, "Parallel Cultures and the Inhibitions to Acculturation In a Guatemalan Community," Social Forces. Vol. 24, No. 1 (October, 1945) p. 1 - 14.

[43] Ibid., p. 14.

[44] John Gillin, "'Race' Relations Without Conflict: A Guatemalan Town," American Journal of Sociology. Vol. LIII, No. 5 (March, 1948) p. 337 - 343.

[45] Ibid., 342. (Italics my own).

The influence of this initial paradigm and method of study towards the Maya of Guatemala cannot be understated. It became ubiquitous throughout North American anthropology and the nascent social science research developing within Guatemala.[46] There were two factors that created such pervasive support for this paradigm. One was the fact that the Maya of meso-america (Mexico, Guatemala, Belize) represented a culture that until this time had undergone almost no direct study as an anthropological subject, either archaeologically or as an existing cultural entity. As such, there was no relevant documentation or prevailing paradigm which suggested an alternative approach or understanding i.e. a sentimental "Indianist" position. The second factor was that this intensive anthropological study of the Maya in Guatemala was initiated during the ascendancy of the "modernization" paradigm, a paradigm that would foster a broad inter-disciplinary consensus premised on a "value free and objective" social science framework, applicable to the study of all nations. As is well known, this paradigm was premised on a progressive linear conception of economic and political development in which the institutions, societal - cultural values, and individual attitudes within the United States were considered at the apex of this development process. A nation or people were considered "modern" and "politically developed" to the degree that they replicated this standard, and nations were generally considered to be embedded in a worldwide "modernizing" process that would lead ultimately to this level. In this respect, the discipline of anthropology was particularly well placed to offer an "expert" assessment on both the cultural and the political processes in a nation with an "Indian" majority. As this review of the early anthropological research has demonstrated, the assessment on Guatemala emphasized that this nation had dim prospects in the immediate future for either democratic institutions or Maya socio-economic integration (Maya political participation not being even considered). All of these deficiencies were directly or indirectly related to the prevalence of "Indian" culture, attitudes and "primitive traditions," in full agreement with the intellectual Ladino elite of the nation.

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[46] It must be noted that there were several anthropologists of the time that documented Maya life and apsects of the ethnic division without accepting or drawing conclusions based on this paradigm. See, for example, Ruth Bunzel, Chichicastenango. (Locust Valley: J. J. Augustin, 1952); Charles Wagley, Economics of a Guatemalan Village. (Menasha: American Anthropological Association, 1941) and The Social and Religious Life of a Guatemalan Village. (Menasha: American Anthropological Association, 1949); Melvin Tumin, Caste In a Peasant Society. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952); Maud Oakes, The Two Crosses of Todos Santos. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951).

Anthropology and the "Decade of Revolution"

Given the existing anthropological judgment on the Guatemalan nation, the 1944-54 period of "revolution" was thus confronted and understood with a high degree of skepticism and bias. This was also in accordance with the prevailing U.S. government's attitude towards ongoing events under the Arévalo and Arbenz administrations. In fact, there was no discernible divergence between the negative political assessment of the U.S. government and that of the anthropologists who were actively doing research in various Maya communities throughout the country. The nationalist and anti-American rhetoric of various political parties appears to have quickly alienated the sympathies of these North American anthropologists, and these specialists readily agreed that even under the Arévalo government, the political context had become too "radical."

> During the six years of the Arévalo administration a number of young Guatemalans who had been bitten by the philosophical bug of communism became very active in politics and especially in the formation of labor unions, the initiation of mass organizations, and the development of ideologies for some of the political parties.[47]

Their view of the Arbenz administration was thus as much colored by the U.S. press hysteria and the U.S. government's hostile position as it was by their own theoretical assumptions about the possibilities for political development in Guatemala.[48] Consequently, the reforms under Arevalo and Arbenz, and the attempts at unionization and the organizing of political parties at the local level, were met with an extreme degree of suspicion. As Richard Adams (Stokes Newbold) was to observe, "[T]he government began to subject the rural dweller to various forms of organization, agitation, and propaganda with the general goal of forging him into a pro -

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[47] Stokes Newbold (Richard Adams), "Receptivity to Communist Fomented Agitation In Rural Guatemala," Economic Development and Cultural Change, Vol. 5 (1956-57) p. 339.

[48] Adams cites a U.S. State Department report as the best source for understanding the "communist" threat in Guatemala.

government political force."[49] The general tone was to suggest that both Arévalo and Arbenz were using these forms of voluntary organization as tactics to manipulate the Maya communities for national political ends. This was considered a form of bribery and external pressure which the "Indian" communities would be unable to comprehend or resist. This condemnation is of special interest since these anthropologists in the past had expressed no qualms that the former Ubico dictatorship forced the Maya by law to labor for free (100 to 150 days a year) on public works projects or within the Ladino agro-export sector. The Arbenz administration, and specifically Arbenz's agrarian reform program, were thus viewed in a particular ideological spectrum as proof of a larger state project to construct a "monolithic political order."[50]

What became readily apparent was that the "modernization" paradigm had a definite ideological tinge, in which there was no support or sympathy for state directed capitalism or rural politicization. "Land reform" held connotations of something other than rural or national "development" for these anthropologists. This led to a rather peculiar reversal on the part of anthropological theory at the time. The political activity that was beginning to take place in the rural countryside at the local level was seen as fragmenting and breaking down the traditional political - religious structures within the Maya communities. Prior to the decade of "revolution" this was considered an important prerequisite within the integrationist perspective. With the U.S. hostility towards the Arbenz administration, anthropology began to lament the destruction of the traditional "Indian" hierarchy, which it was argued, was being threatened and weakened by external or "alien" political forces. This shift was obviously motivated by the political position of the United States rather than any real concern for the Maya traditions or communities (whose destruction according to anthropology was supposed to be inevitable anyway). The discrepancy in political positions between the pre-revolutionary period and a revolutionary era antagonistic to U.S. interests could not be more clear. Whereas previously the governments' attempts to "Ladinoize," "civilize," and economically "integrate" the Maya were met with anthropological support, under Arévalo and Arbenz these efforts were considered purely malevolent political intentions. The "modernization" perspective was thus revealed early on to be extremely ideological in nature, as anthropology went from being supporters of a more "liberal Ladino intellectual position" to stern defenders of the most conservative ideological forces inside and outside of Guatemala. The overthrow of Arbenz and the termination of Guatemala's capitalist reform project was thus implicitly supported by the anthropologists of the day. Richard Adams sums up this scholarly attitude by referring to the installation of Castillo Armas as an "anti-communist revolution," implying that it was an internal and national response to "totalitarianism." Noteworthy is the fact that no mention of the important United States role in this "revolution" is entered into the historical record.

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[49] Stokes Newbold, p. 341. See also Richard Adams, ed., "Political Changes in Guatemalan Indian Communities: A Symposium (1957), in Community Culture and National Change. (New Orleans: Tulane University, 1972).

[50] Manning Nash, "Political Relations in Guatemala," Social and Economic Studies. 7 (1958) 65 - 75.

What is evident about the anthropological position in relation to the "decade of revolution" is that it was clearly intertwined with the political perceptions and agenda of the United States government. These "experts" on Guatemala never attempted to deviate from the official U.S. position on Guatemala as "going Communist." Hence they never moved towards a deeper understanding of Guatemalan's "nationalist" or "anti-imperialist" sentiments, sentiments which had considerable historical and existent evidence in their support. Consequently, anthropology's general assessment of the "Indians" as "primitive illiterates" and "politically unsophisticated" only fueled the perception that the "Indians" were being manipulated by "Communists" and organized against their will. As is known, there was little evidence to support such conclusions. The one anthropologist who had an insight into the negative effects of Ladino domination over Maya, and a sympathetic understanding of the Maya's economic and social situation, was Morris Siegel. In a brief article published after the overthrow of Arbenz, Siegel noted that both Arévalo and Arbenz had introduced and adhered to democratic principles, and that he himself had observed the beginnings of a Maya assertiveness towards Ladinos. This he lauded as an important achievement of the revolution given that many Ladinos "yearn for the 'good old days' of Ladino domination over Indians under personal dictatorial regimes."[51] Nonetheless, despite supporting every gain introduced by Arévalo and Arbenz, Siegel could not condemn the U.S. action against Guatemala and he celebrated the fact that "communism" had not been allowed to penetrate the Indian masses. The anthropological record was to stridently defend a U.S. government version of political events in Guatemala.

Perhaps the most important event between 1944 and 1954 in relation to the Maya of Guatemala was the land reform, given the Maya's unique spiritual attachment to the land. When the land reform project went into effect, there was no attempt by anthropology to enthusiastically or critically determine how this program would or would not benefit the general economic and social existence of the Maya population. As a result, anthropology did not pursue or forward an evaluation of the Maya in relation to this government policy, nor how the benefits of land reform were distributed in terms of ethnicity. In effect, anthropology lost an important opportunity to insert an ethnically defined account, that truly expressed the interests and aspirations of the Maya peoples, into the heated national debate concerning Guatemala's national development. Their ethnocentric and biased predisposition towards political events in Guatemala between 1944 and 1954, and their narrow conception of the structure of Maya culture and ethnic relations, prevented the emergence within anthropology of an early political and ethnic discourse placed within the context of progressive national change.

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[51] Morris Siegel, "Perspective on Guatemala," The New Republic. (July 19, 1954) p. 13.

Anthropology In the post-1954 Period

With the installation of the Castillo Armas regime and the persistence of undemocratic state action, the anthropological record became silent. No critical evaluation of the following post - revolutionary regimes was ever made, nor was any research continued that questioned or documented the new regimes' political organizations and ideologies in relation to the "indian" communities and their traditions. This is despite the fact that the "Indians" became the focus of intense propaganda and rebuke by the Catholic Church, and underwent interrogation by Castillo Armas' security forces. The reassertion of a pliant and brutal regime supportive of U.S. interests, the abrogation of the land reform program and the return of all lands to their former owners, and the disenfranchisement of illiterates (thus the Maya population), was not questioned or scrutinized. It was as if the Maya had been returned to a social and political position which more readily reflected the existing anthropological perception of their "natural" condition, and Guatemala as a whole was reinstated to a more acceptable status on the path to "modernization" and "political development."

By the 1950s, the in-depth studies of the Maya communities that had made several North American anthropologists renowned in their field, began to wane. Into the late 1950s there was only a very small amount of research and publishing that pertained directly to the Maya in Guatemala. There was also no effort made to update past studies or to initiate a more comprehensive framework to compare communities or regions within Guatemala. This decline in scholarly interest by North American anthropology appears to be the result of two factors. One factor was the attempt to extend research into South America, particularly the Andean region and Brazil. The second factor was that the establishment of facilities to undertake long - term research on the Maya through U.S. universities became based in southern Mexico rather than within Guatemala. The Maya of Mexico became the focus of continued anthropological research, with the Maya communities in Guatemala utilized only as secondary sources of information or examination (and generally from the existent literature). Thus, the Mexican - Maya experience was generalized as the standard for all Maya. This failure to recognize that national politics and economic conditions deviated significantly between Guatemala and Mexico, and consequently would have a different impact on Maya communities, did not faze this integrationist approach. Comparisons were made across borders, regions and continents without discussing national differences and the diverse historical experiences of these "Indian" communities.[52] The dominant perception within the anthropological literature still remained that of the "isolated community" embedded within an ongoing but amorphous process of worldwide "modernization."

As of the late 1950s, the rigid processes of acculturation and integration within the modernization paradigm were being challenged by a subtle but important emphasis on the "persistent strength" of numerous "Indian" communities. The basic question that underlies this challenge was why acculturation and integration were not commensurate with the level of modernization and industrialization taking place around these communities. What gave rise to this observation were two main factors, one methodological, and the other stemming from a more in-depth understanding of the dynamics within "Indian" communities and how they related to modernization. The methodological factor was the greater utilization of archaeological, historical and ethno-historical sources, which demonstrated the resilience but persistent separateness of "Indians" from the dominant forces of Western or Spanish societies. The second factor was the realization that there was a complex dynamic between the "community" and the process of modernization, in which the communities were either capable of withstanding or integrating facets of modern society without the community noticeably fragmenting or disintegrating. There was also some evidence that a community could be overwhelmingly affected by modernization without a specific "Indian" consciousness, language, or set of traditions dissipating. This dynamic encompassed notions of both active resistance and selective adaptation, and led to the wider conceptual usage of Eric Wolf's "corporate community." The concept of a "corporate community" served to reconcile the long standing theoretical separation between the non-culturally based discussions of "peasant" or subsistence economies, and the culturally specific discussions on "Indian" communities. Such a concept suggested a certain hybrid version of "peasantry" whose persistence was strengthened by community - cultural traditions. This conceptual framework reinforced the "community" approach and placed it on a stronger theoretical footing in explaining and accounting for the continuing prevalence of "Indian" culture, culture being a set of values and habits that formerly had been considered quite malleable. Nevertheless, this approach was still encased within a larger "modernization" understanding of the larger society, and hence the politics and the economy of a specific nation state were not subject to an interactive and critical analysis in relation to these "Indian" communities. Still less was there a politics of ethnic relations or ethnic domination clearly outlined.

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[52] Such a discussion is most clearly reflected in the papers and debates that were edited by Sol Tax and published under the title Heritage of Conquest. (Illinois: The Free Press, 1952).

As this brief overview has demonstrated, the first and then most pervasive approach to the study of the Maya majority in Guatemala wholly defended the Ladino interpretation and continued domination of the Maya peoples. The central premise of this anthropological perspective was a process of "integration" or "Ladinoization," premised itself on the "modernization" of Guatemalan society. The paradigm held firmly to the view that ethnic relations were either harmonious or benign, and not the least obstructive to full Maya integration into the dominant Ladino culture. As will be described in the following chapters, this ahistorical and uncritical approach was probably the most grave oversight or misrepresentation of this early research, for it failed to recognize Ladino domination and discrimination as an active practice containing powerful motives that reinforced this behavior. As well, the influence of this North American evaluation on Ladino intellectuals cannot be understated. These early studies and theoretical positions provided the context under which Ladino nationals would initiate their own studies of the Maya. Numerous works by these North American anthropologists were translated into Spanish establishing the first important insights into Maya traditions and culture, but subjecting the Maya to a framework of analysis that neither defended nor sympathized with their prevailing attitudes, traditions, or way of life. The prestige and influence of American scholarship at the time, the idea of an apolitical and inevitable process of economic and political modernization, and the perception of a nonviolent Ladino - Maya socio-cultural integration, all fostered a powerful illusion concerning the prospects for Guatemala's future (with an acceptance of the present) and a solution to the "Indian problem." The mainstay of anthropological research in Guatemala was the "community - level study" (or an aspect thereof) initially advanced by Sol Tax, with a focus on distinct practices, political - religious organizations, levels of acculturation, and incidence of "Ladinoization." This framework of analysis, which refrained from broader regional examinations within Guatemala, dominated the literature from the 1940s until the 1970s. The notion of a Maya collectivity (versus an "Indian community") in contrast and opposition to the Ladino collectivity, would not appear in the anthropological literature until the late 1980s, and under completely different circumstances. In conclusion, I would argue that the discipline of anthropology marginalized itself from an ongoing political discourse, refusing to assert a politicized perspective that stressed or queried the implications of having an ethnic majority, so different in every regard from the dominant but minority culture. As I have demonstrated, this limitation arose directly from the theory, biases and predisposition established with the first studies. It also proved to be a set of cognitive structures that were almost impervious to significant change.

The Emergence of the Class - Dependency Perspective

The strongest challenge to the prevailing anthropological perspective on Guatemalan society did not emerge from within anthropology, but from a more sophisticated political - historical analysis which I will broadly refer to as the "class - dependency" perspective. The roots of the class - dependency perspective lay in the nationalist / anti - U.S. discourse that emerged between 1944 and 1954, and was reasserted as a more penetrating critique of Guatemalan society during the 1960s through the communist Guatemalan Worker's Party, guerrilla organizations of the time period, and students and academics of the national university, all influenced by the Cuban revolutionary experience and reacting to the military dictatorship in Guatemala from 1963 to 1966. The class - dependency perspective would replace all discussion of the ethnically based, Ladino - Maya distinction, with an economically and socially based "class analysis." Since anthropology was never able to articulate a clear and politically oriented debate based on the existing ethnic collectivities, its "modernization" assumptions were extremely vulnerable to the criticism that the Guatemalan social and political reality did not reflect an inevitable process of progressive economic, social and political development. As the whole "modernization" paradigm fell into disrepute during the 1960s, so did the relevance of understanding Guatemala in terms of a Maya - Ladino distinction.

There were numerous events that precipitated the emergence of the class - dependency perspective. One major factor, as noted, was the growing discrepancy between the U.S. dissemination of "modernization" theory and the Latin American reality, as dictatorships and repression swept the continent. A second was an ideological critique in which modernization theory obscured a darker process. It was argued that the historical development of the North necessarily entailed the continued impoverishment and underdevelopment of the South or Third World, destroying the assumption of a simple process of replication. In the case of Guatemala these themes were particularly evident and intensified by the obvious imperialist role of the U.S. in overthrowing Arbenz, in the Guatemalan economy, and in supporting repressive regimes since 1954. This emerging Latin American and North American Left critique expanded on the examination of this imperialist process in the political and economic spheres of Guatemala. This perspective derived its inspiration from the revolution in Cuba and the nascent guerrilla movement in the Ladino southeast of Guatemala, and was openly critical of the U.S. role in world affairs. With the aggressive U.S. position towards Vietnam and Cuba as well as the U.S. military's increasing role in Guatemala, this new Left developed a more comprehensive and radical perspective based on the 1944-54 Guatemalan experience. Although there are broad variations within this class - dependency perspective, the general thrust of the perspective has been to articulate an ongoing critical assessment of the impact of American imperialism (politically and economically) within Guatemala or Central America generally. The attempt has been to define those social sectors that benefit and those that are affected adversely by this U.S. influence in the isthmus. More so than in other regions, American imperialism is considered the key factor in determining how class conflict is played out in these Central American countries. Hence, all political conflict is viewed as taking place in relation to the determinant U.S. role in the region, and not just in terms of existing political forces within each nation.

By the early 1970s there were a number of important works on Guatemala which incorporated the "revolution / counter - revolution" dichotomy into an extended historical understanding. These works focused on how U.S. corporate and political power were intimately involved in subverting progressive and nationalist movements, and openly supportive of military - dictatorships and reactionary elites.[53] Although the main focus of these early works was on U.S. corporate interests and how they worked in tangent with U.S. military policy, these works also included the first important analyses on the changing class structure within Guatemalan society. What was elaborated was a perspective that examined the specific economic, social, and political forces at work in Guatemala.

At the economic level it was observed that throughout the 1960s the isthmus had undergone a significant alteration, fostering increased disjunctures within the Guatemalan national economy. There was not just an expansion in the traditional agro-export sectors of coffee and bananas, but also a noticeable diversification into sugar cane, cotton and cattle. This led to an important distinction being drawn regarding the structure of rural Guatemala. It was argued that the rapid growth of the agro-export sector, which remained tightly controlled by a small oligarchy, was taking place at the expense of small-holding subsistence production engaged in by the majority of the rural population. The increasing concentration of lands by the oligarchy and the resulting landlessness, rural poverty and "proletarianization" served to reinforce the need for land reform and those measures initiated by Arbenz. It also dramatized the U.S. role, past and present, in undermining those political forces who have advocated or adopted such an agenda of economic adjustment.

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[53] Alfonso Bauer Paiz, "The Third Government of the Revolution and Imperialism In Guatemala," Science and Society. 34, 2 (Summer, 1970) p. 146 - 165. José Luis Balcarcel, "Crítica De La Situación Crítica De Guatemala," Cuadernos Americanos. 30, CLXXIV, 1 (1971) p. 7 - 44. Thomas and Marjorie Melville, Guatemala - Another Vietnam? (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971). Eduardo Galeano, Guatemala: Occupied Country. trans. by Cedric Belfrage (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969). NACLA, Guatemala. Susanne Jonas and David Tobis, eds., (New York: Waller Press, 1974).

A second economic trend was the rapid industrialization in the urban centers (notably Guatemala City) throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, in which the flow of U.S. corporate capital and the construction of subsidiaries played a paramount role in this process, as opposed to national capital sources. In the case of Guatemala, the project to extract the huge nickel reserves around Lake Izabal by a joint U.S. - Canada conglomerate became a symbol of a weak sovereignty over the national territory, the existence of a compliant elite, and external exploitation with minimal compensation (reminiscent of the UFCo. legacy). The attraction of U.S. capital to the area was premised on low wages without unionization, weak or non-existent government regulations (health, safety, environment), low or non-existent levels of taxation, minimal restrictions on the flow of capital and profits, and generous terms surrounding the importing and exporting of goods. These conditions favored an industrialization based on "finishing" or the assembly of semi-finished products through imported capital (machinery, technology), thus minimizing the degree of national involvement in the production process and in the construction / service of industrial capital. Due to the high technology - low labor requirements of this economic activity, the expanding industrial base was able to absorb but a small percentage of those rural peoples displaced by the expanding agro-export sector. The economy was further weakened by the extent to which the utilization of lands and industry were directed towards production for external markets (largely the U.S.) rather than for internal consumption. Agricultural products were also subject to extreme price variations on the world market or to arbitrary tariffs and trade barriers, factors which the Guatemalan government had absolutely no control over. Hence, this agro-export and industrial expansion registered extremely high levels of national growth but undermined subsistence production and internal markets. This resulted in increased levels of poverty and immiseration for the majority, who were unable to pay for those imported goods that made up for the production decrease in the subsistence economy. Guatemala's economy reflected a "dependent industrialization" process in all its major sectors.

These combined economic trends were seen as radically altering the class structure. The pressures on the rural subsistence economy from agro-export production were forcing either the semi- or full proletarianization of the rural population. Having lost the security generated by land ownership or the ability to sustain themselves adequately off their existing quantities of land, this huge peasant population was becoming absorbed into the labor market. The majority were only able to be temporarily or seasonally employed, and hence their conceptualization as "semi-proletarianized" since they either retained some level of subsistence from their lands or earned income through various marketing or service activities. This rapid increase in the size of the labor market had a dual effect. On the one hand it is thought to have maintained wages and work conditions at a minimal level due to the competition for employment. On the other hand it served to disrupt the stable but politically quiescent peasant economy, by placing whole families in urban or rural work environments conducive to organization and politicization. Although there was an increase in the size of the "middle class," what was most apparent was the degree to which the traditional land owning oligarchy and small business class (or together, a core of affluent families) were able to monopolize the benefits and wealth that accrued from linkages with U.S. capital. There emerged then a large underpaid and underutilized proletariat, a politically weak and financially insecure middle class, and a more wealthy and powerful oligarchic bourgeoisie. This latter class had diverse economic interests in all major sectors of the economy. Given the process of monopolization by U.S. corporations and the local elite, and the gradual impoverishment of more of the population, the conditions for prolonged and violent "class - conflict" were considered to be growing more obvious.

The emerging social class structure fostered an early "weak state" conception among political observers. In this social environment, where lands, capital, and wealth were controlled by a small and rapacious elite, significant limits were placed on democratic practices and political activity in order to prevent the assertion of organized demands for redistributive state policies. The military became a dominant political force in ensuring the perpetuation of this social structure. Whereas in the past the military had traditionally been tightly aligned behind personalistic dictatorships, the new military structure was more professional and adhered to a broader Cold War - capitalist ideology. This resulted from the increased training, financing, arming and integration with U.S. military forces. In this initial class - dependency perspective, the direct role of U.S. military officers and advisors in aiding the Guatemalan military against the guerrilla movement in the southeast led to a number of similarities being drawn between U.S. strategies in Vietnam and Guatemala. With the emerging social structure, the persistence of the guerrilla movement, the rise of right-wing "death squads," and the attacks on progressive political activists, the political atmosphere appeared to be polarizing towards a prolonged revolutionary struggle. The prognosis for radical social and political change was definitely optimistic at this time, given the example of the Cuban Revolution, and the growth of guerrilla and national liberation movements throughout the continent. U.S. imperialism only fostered and reproduced the conditions which gave rise to these movements and political struggles. In the case of Guatemala, the recent and direct experience with U.S. imperialism imputed a particular understanding of how revolutionary change was almost inevitable. The "revolutionary / counter - revolutionary" dichotomy tended to suggest that the majority of Guatemalans were already politicized by their past experience and ready to be led against the existing regime, requiring a minimal level of organization. This introduced a high degree of speculation about the possibilities for "spontaneous" and broad based political activity into the class - dependency perspective as it applied to Guatemala. Consequently, the motivations and conditions under which the first guerrilla movement developed in Guatemala came under very little scrutiny in relation to the ethnic, geographical, or class divisions existing at the time.

The initial class - dependency perspective was focused on two main themes that would dominate discussions up to the present. One was the excessive U.S. influence both within the Guatemalan economy and within national politics. In the economy, U.S. capital was revealed to play a dynamic but socially destructive role. This took place either directly (subsidiaries), or indirectly through already established and wealthy Guatemalan economic sectors, thus subverting the "national bourgeoisie" and heightening nationalist and anti-imperialist sentiments. At the political level the U.S. government's role was also dominant in restructuring and strengthening the military; thus the Guatemalan military became another visible expression of U.S. imperialist policy and political influence within Guatemala. The second theme was the emphasis on the destruction of the subsistence economy by expanding agro-export production (latifundia vs. minifundia), resulting in increased immiseration, varying degrees of "proletarianization," and the deepening of capitalist production relations. These trends implied an "explosive" social context, conducive to overwhelming support for the existing revolutionary movements.

With the class - dependency perspective there was a strong tendency to deny any "autonomy" or independent sphere of action to the military and national political elite due to the imperialist parameters established by the United States. Hence, national economic policies and political decisions were presented in such a manner as to impute that they were almost directly dictated by the United States. There was also an overestimation within this perspective of the revolutionary potential of Guatemalan society as a whole. It is certain that Guatemala City was the center for considerable political activity and political violence throughout the 1960s and 1970s, but I would add that this led to a heightened perception, or the misperception, that radical political change was forthcoming. It was still a fact that the majority of the population, and particularly the Maya majority, were rural based and marginal to the ongoing political debate, conflict and violence. As will be demonstrated more clearly in the following chapters, the class -

dependency perspective did not address the economic and political dimensions of the ethnic and regional question in Guatemala. It has, then, not speculated as to how these may adversely affect, or limit, the emergence of a revolutionary social context as outlined within this theory. This tendency was expressed most clearly when a challenge arose to both the mainstream North American anthropology and the growing popularity of the class - dependency perspective, during the late 1960s.

In 1970 a collection of essays were published by two professors in Guatemala, Carlos Guzmán Böckler and Jean-Loup Herbert.[54] Utilizing the works of Franz Fanon and Jean Paul Sartre on colonization and the "colonial mind," these authors examined the historical and social dimensions of the "racism" against the Maya in Guatemala in terms of a long established practice and continuing manifestation in contemporary Guatemalan society, that was initiated with the Spanish conquest. These authors' celebration and support for the continued resistance of the Maya against "Ladinoization" and "integration" (which they reveal as nothing but a process of capitalist "proletarianization"), their discussion of the economy as a readily apparent ethnic division, and their critique of Ladino ideology and social status, represented a theoretical and political departure that was extremely advanced for its time. I would add that this work still remains far ahead of its time considering the present level of debate on the ethnic question in both Guatemala and North America. This collection advanced a highly contentious thesis, namely that the "ethnic conflict" was the "class conflict" in Guatemala. To this they added a biting criticism of the social composition and "class analysis" theories of the Ladino political and revolutionary left, condemning them as "petty bourgeois" radicals whose Marxist theorizing was entrapped in the same modernizing and racist assumptions of North American anthropology. The political left only reinforced the existing racist Ladino ideology and its discriminatory practices, and justified the continued economic and cultural domination of Ladino over Maya. Böckler and Herbert suggested that this significant weakness in left thinking played an important role in the overthrow of the Arbenz government, and that it continued to be an important limitation on the possibilities for revolutionary change unless Marxist theory was adapted to the specific ethnic realities within Guatemala. Böckler and Herbert also pointed out the modernizing tendencies within the prevailing Marxist theorizing, and observed a concerted and collective effort by the Maya to resist "proletarianization" and "integration" into the dominant Ladino culture. It is important to note that these processes were considered by the class - dependency perspective to be inevitable, and to a high degree, ultimately necessary to fomenting radical social change. In addition, these authors went beyond the traditional left - right political division, and explicated several dimensions of a racist Ladino ideology. This difference is significant in that their discussion of racism as an "ideology," rather than conceived as a collection of anachronistic views and attitudes, suggested that there were still powerful economic, social and political motivations across Ladino society which kept this ethnic distinction relevant. Böckler and Herbert presented the first attempt at a systematic critique of the various dimensions and dynamics of Ladino cultural domination, a historical analysis of ethnicity and ethnic - class conflict, and a defense of the Maya forms of resistance and culture.

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[54] Carlos Guzmán Böckler and Jean-Loup Herbert, Guatemala: una interpretación histórico - social. (Mexico: Siglo XXI Editores, 1970).

What could have been a reorientation and enrichment of the class - dependency and anthropological perspectives was not to take place. Anthropologists, whether North American or Guatemalan, refused to enter a politically charged theoretical debate about Ladino - Maya relations and the work was neither discussed nor broke the emphasis on community studies. The class - dependency response was even more hostile. At a time when Marxist categories and Marxist theorizing on "class" and capitalist development were becoming the definitive "scientific" and revolutionary paradigm for understanding all of Latin America, a departure into indigenous - cultural issues and the blurring of the "class conflict" with "ethnic conflict," was not welcome. Certainly with spread of guerrilla and revolutionary movements across Central and South America, and the perception of volatile social conditions, the political left was not willing to critically examine its own relationship to the Maya in terms of a racial dichotomy or a theoretical failing. The work of Böckler and Herbert was roundly criticized for its theoretical departures in historical interpretation and "liberal" usage of Marxist theory. Where Böckler and Herbert had stressed an ideological examination of Guatemalan society based on specific ethnic and class characteristics, the class - dependency perspective replied on two alternate fronts. Shortly after Böckler's and Herbert's work was released, the Guatemalan Marxist historian, Severo Martínez Peláez, published his monumental work on the history of colonial Guatemala.[55] Martínez argued that the whole conception of a "Maya identity and culture" was fictitious, and that after four and a half centuries the "Maya" were in all respects a creation of Spanish rule. Hence the categories of "Indian" and "Ladino" were Spanish created distinctions which served to mystify and conceal the real class relations within Guatemalan society. "Indian culture" was an impoverished or poor culture fostered out of an inferiority complex, fear, and centuries of oppression. Within Martínez's critique of Maya culture and Guatemala's economic backwardness was the sentiment that the Ladino - Maya distinction was a colonial affectation and holdover which would disappear with a more equal distribution of land and progressive labor laws, as had been introduced under Arévalo and Arbenz. Martínez stressed the degree to which the Maya culture was a fabrication, or wholly contextual, and this reinforced a second reply that was more rigidly Marxist and economistic. This latter interpretation of the Guatemalan reality argued that a discussion purely in terms of class categories (peasant, proletariat) was more applicable and relevant. With the abolition of debt servitude and the vagrancy laws, the Maya, like their Ladino class - counterparts, were "free" laborers in the traditional Marxist understanding of the concept. The Maya's seasonal employment on the agro-export estates constituted an "objective class" relationship between proletariat and capitalist, and hence the ethnic issue became fully subsumed within a broader discussion of the potentialities of revolutionary activity arising from this relationship. This led to an important distinction being imposed between the "objective" and "subjective" conditions prevalent in Guatemalan society. Objectively the Maya and Ladino shared a common condition based on a certain level of proletarianization and subjection to capitalist production (expansion of agro-export and industry), and the same poverty and immiseration resulting from this process. The "ethnic" or "Indian - Ladino" distinction, religious divisions, and rural - urban differences were confined to a subjective or secondary level. The assumption was that the overpowering commonalties fostered by the expansion of these "objective" conditions would lead to political action, thus dissipating the cultural - religious divisions that were known to separate Ladinos from Maya.[56] The issues raised by Böckler and Herbert were quickly dismissed and a critical review of the prevailing social theory never took place. For the class - dependency theorists the Maya represented generally a peasant class enmeshed in a reactionary cultural and religious tradition. Only increased proletarianization and the disruption of their communities by capitalist expansion could break this isolation. The general view of the Maya highlands was that it represented a bastion of reactionary attitudes, petty capitalist relations, and political ignorance.[57] If the Maya were resisting proletarianization, they were not only resisting the inevitable process of modernization, but the "revolution" as well.

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[55] Severo Martínez Peláez, La Patria del Criollo. (Guatemala: Editorial Universitaria, 1970).

The implications of this rebuttal were quite significant at a number of levels. One is the extent to which the distinctive Maya peoples and cultures were submitted to a ruthless theoretical assessment by the class - dependency perspective. Due to this reappraisal the Maya were now denied any "authenticity" as a culture, the inklings of a "Maya nationalism" were dismissed as a bourgeois ideology, and Maya attempts to prevent cultural assimilation and preserve their way of life were discounted as reactionary, divisive and futile. The one note of sympathy accorded the Maya was that they had the potential for political activity through their laboring in the agro-export sector. This is a rather strange criterion for acceptance when one recognizes that this represented the most brutal form of employment in the country, and one that the Maya made every effort to avoid. It could be argued, then, that the continued impoverishment and destruction of the Maya communities was subtly celebrated, whereas the few Maya successes through petty commodity production, surplus agriculture, or education into professions, were the objects of scorn. At a more general level, this critique thoroughly expelled from all later political debates about contemporary Guatemala any reference to the Ladino - Maya ethnic dimension in social conflict. The Maya majority and the Maya highlands were largely discounted as an area worth being understood in any depth or from which to expect any political activity. Consequently, within the class - dependency perspective there is no attempt to examine or understand the economic, social, and political changes peculiar to the Maya highlands. Throughout the 1970s the experiences of the Maya went largely unrecorded within the political - historical record despite the anthropological evidence that documented a dramatic economic and social alteration underway in the highlands.

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[56] See Angela Anthony, "The Minority That is a Majority," in NACLA, Guatemala (1974), and Carlos Figueroa Ibarra, el proletariado rural en el agro guatemalteco. (Guatemala: Editorial Universitaria, 1980).

[57] Carol Smith, "Marxists on Class and Culture in Guatemala," in 1492-1992: Five Centuries of Imperialism and Resistance. Ron Bourgeault et. al., eds., (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1992).

Anthropology and the Maya During the 1970s

During the 1960s and 1970s, when Guatemala was becoming infamous for its political violence and military - dominated regimes, the anthropological research of the day served to confirm rather than deny the position of the class - dependency perspective towards the Maya. Throughout the 1960s, though, the ways in which the Maya were being studied had changed considerably. In Guatemala the National Indigenous Institute had published a number of articles and studies that were critical of the existing land tenure system and the impact of seasonal labor employment on the Maya communities, and further pressed the government to improve the level of national services in the Maya highlands i.e. health, education.[58] This perspective still held to an "integrationist" and apolitical view of ethnic relations, but placed an emphasis on developing and supporting the Maya communities. The underlying tone was that the Maya suffered as much from "national neglect" as from characteristics intrinsic to the Maya communities themselves. Although this represents a marginal theoretical advance compared to Böckler and Herbert, within

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[58] These impressions are drawn from articles in the journal Guatemala Indígena during the 1960s and 1970s.

Guatemala it represented a significant advance. Nevertheless, the continued documentation of persistent Maya economic, religious, linguistic and cultural practices surely only served to confirm the class - dependency's perception of the Maya as shrouded in tradition and politically marginal.

Within North American anthropology the collapse of modernization theory led to a plethora of alternative methods of study. Still, certain tendencies did persist, such as the emphasis on the community level study, references to "Ladinoization," and an evasiveness in discussing ethnicity in broader political, social and economic terms. What changed was a willingness to broaden the framework of analysis and attempt a deeper and sympathetic understanding of the Maya cosmology, historical views and religious - cultural traditions. This entailed an increased consideration of historical factors and an effort to discover how the Maya understood their own history, thus developing a more ethno - historical approach.[59] What was revealed within these studies was the degree to which the Maya - Ladino distinction was still readily apparent in the hierarchy of social positions, Ladino - Maya attitudes and views, and economic relations. Neither modernization nor acculturation, such as the acquisition of greater Spanish linguistic skills by the Maya, had negated these divisions or weakened animosities.

Along with an increased interest in community ethno - histories, there were also more general studies which examined Maya communities in a comparative framework, focusing on economic, social and religious differences. In addition, through the utilization of regional perspectives or a willingness to generalize from individual research and the collective body of literature, the rigorous "community differences" criterion established by Sol Tax gave way to more sweeping generalizations. There was now a greater tendency to discuss common social and economic changes taking place across the Maya highlands. By the mid 1970s, the anthropologist Carol Smith was able to discern specific economic dynamics and relationships between regions in the Maya highlands. This suggested a growing economic differentiation between Maya areas and a measurable level of prosperity in some centers due to diverse economic activities.[60] These changes occurred without a loss of a "Maya" identity or community identification. The most important transformations taking place across the Maya highlands during the 1960s and 1970s were documented by the anthropolog . Ricardo Falla, who examined both the impact of the availability of modern chemical fertilizers on the agricultural practices of the small holding Maya, and the socio - cultural changes at the community level that arose from the proselytizing of the Catholic Action movement.[61] Such subtle changes were ignored by the class - dependency perspective, even though they altered the traditional Ladino - Maya economic relationship in the highlands. Ricardo Falla was also the only scholar to document and critically assess the emergence of a Maya political party and the strengthening of a Maya nationalist agenda.[62] Again, this was a manifestation of the changing economic and social reality of the Maya which failed to fit within the rigid categories of the class - dependency perspective. In fact, a growing and generalized Maya prosperity belied the strongest trend hypothesized by the class - dependency perspective, namely a continued process of proletarianization and immiseration due to the expansion of capitalist production. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, this mistaken hypothesis arose in part from overestimating the capitalist strength of the agro - export and industrial bourgeoisie. As this brief overview has mentioned, numerous economic, social and political processes were ongoing in the Maya highlands.

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[59] Benjamin Colby and Pierre van den Berghe, Ixil Country. (Berkely: University of California Press, 1969). Waldemar Smith, The Fiesta System and Economic Change. (New York: University of Columbia Press, 1977). Kay Warren, The Symbolism of Subordination. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978). Douglas Brintnall, Revolt Against the Dead. (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1979).

[60] Carol Smith, "Examining Stratification Systems Through Peasant Marketing Arrangements," Man (London). Vol. 10, (1975); and "Beyond Dependency Theory, National and Regional Patterns of Underdevelopment In Guatemala," American Ethnologist 5 (1978).

The Class - Depdency Perspective (Late 1970s - Early 1980s)

With the destruction by the early 1970s of the rural guerrilla movement in the Ladino southeast, and the rise of fraudulently elected military officers throughout the 1970s, the emphasis of the class - dependency perspective turned towards understanding the specific state form and the high levels of violence that accompanied it. The majority of this theorizing examined particular trends: the rapid industrialization, the expansion and contraction of the Central American Common Market, the consequences of the new military bourgeoisie, political and economic divisions within the bourgeoisie, the formation of popular class organizations, divisions within the military stemming from its economic and political participation, and the forms of state repression. Throughout the 1970s, political analysis was dominated by the discussion of state violence and the continual attempts by labor and various center and left political organizations to confront the repression through the electoral arena.[63] By 1978, with the fraudulent election of the third successive military officer, General Romeo Lucas Garcia, there was still little reference to the strength of various guerrilla movements as an organized force that threatened the existing military state. Between 1979 and 1981, as the Maya highlands became the geographical center for the majority of the military's repressive activities and encounters with the guerrilla forces, the class - dependency perspective was ill-prepared to understand why the Maya had become participants in a revolutionary struggle against the military state. In contrast, up until the early 1980s, the main political theorists on Guatemala were still confirming the combined strength of the political right and the military regime in relation to the popular classes and the revolutionary organizations.

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[61] Ricardo Falla, Quiché Rebelde. (Guatemala: Editorial Universitaria, 1978).

[62] Ricardo Falla, "El Movimiento Indígena," Estudios Centroamericanos 32 (Junio - Julio, 1978) 437 - 461.

[63] Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, "Terror and Violence as Weapons of Counterinsurgency In Guatemala," Latin American Perspectives. Vol. 7, No. 2 - 3 (1980) p. 91 - 113. CIDCA, Violencia y Contraviolencia. (Guatemala: Editorial Universitaria De Guatemala, 1980). Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, Jorge Romero Imery, et. al., Dialectica Del Terror En Guatemala. (Centroamérica: EDUCA, 1981).

What altered this prevailing assessment on the relative strengths of the existing political forces was the formation of the URNG in 1981,[64] the elite hostility towards the military during the 1982 national elections, the military coup against General Lucas García that brought General Ríos Montt to power in 1982, and the ferocious military assault launched by the military directly upon the Maya highlands. This led to several reevaluations within the class - dependency perspective about the existing military state and the revolutionary threat posed by the civilian and Maya populations. The oligarchic bourgeoisie, with its various political party expressions, were now viewed as irredeemably wracked by conflict and internecine battles, unable to resolve their economic and political divisions. These conflicts were considered to be directly reflected within the military itself, divided internally by corruption, political ideologies, economic interests, and unable to unite effectively against the increasing popular and revolutionary threat posed by the civilian population.[65] Thus, General Ríos Montt was installed to enforce a unity within the bourgeoisie and the military in order to deal effectively with the revolutionary threat. Within the class - dependency perspective at the time, no one considered Ríos Montt and the military as capable of resolving the deep contradictions within the economy and society, nor was it thought that the extreme violence initiated by the military could effectively counter the revolutionary movements in Guatemalan society. These insights seemed to be confirmed when Ríos Montt was overthrown in 1983 by General Mejía Víctores. The military was viewed as on the defensive, relying on state terror, and destined to be overthrown by the forces of revolution.

It is from within this description and evaluation of ongoing events that there arose a lingering problem. The strongest guerrilla presence and activities were concentrated in the Maya highlands. The Maya, it was then argued, had become the main protagonists in a revolutionary struggle against the military state, which in theory they should not have been. In contrast, the rural Ladino southwest and southeast were areas neither actively involved in this effort nor targeted directly by the military assault. The class - dependency perspective would elaborate two conceptions that were inextricably linked, but which did not flow easily from their earlier estimations. One conception was that the military dominated state as a specific "state form" had become seriously weakened by its own contradictions, notably political and economic competition within and between the military and the civilian bourgeoisie, and was threatened by an organized and revolutionary political alternative supported by the civilian or "popular classes." Consequently, when the military unleashed its vicious counter - insurgency campaign across the Maya highlands in 1982, this was considered a desperate act of survival by an illegitimate and internationally isolated terror regime. As noted, this first conception contains the second conception, which is that the URNG posed a militarily powerful and popularly supported alternative to the prevailing military dominated state, and an alternative that united rural - urban, Ladino - Maya forces. This new "popular class" subject was interpreted as overcoming all previous socio - cultural divisions and creating a significant "multi-class popular front." As this conception implies, the cultural-ethnic dimension was again subsumed into a "class-based" understanding of events. This reading, though, required a considerable reassessment of how Maya society had been altered during the 1970s to account for the Maya's supposed "radicalization" and overwhelming endorsement of a revolutionary agenda. It was this attempt at reinterpreting the contemporary Maya experience within a class - dependency perspective that led to an important historically based and theoretical challenge being delineated within the literature. This challenge contested the assumptions of the class - dependency perspective on the most recent phase of contemporary Guatemalan political and economic history.

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[64] The Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity or URNG, combined the four existing guerrilla organizations under one central command structure.

[65] See for example, George Black et. al., Garrison Guatemala. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984).

Scholarly Divergence and Ideological Breakdown: Challenges to the Class - Dependency Perspective (1983 to the present)

It would be an understatement to state that the class - dependency perspective was ill-prepared to understand the extreme level of violence that engulfed the Maya highlands between 1979 and 1984. Initially, as the military violence was generalized throughout both urban and rural areas and numerous civilian organizations became active in protesting this state repression, the class - dependency perspective documented these continuing attempts to confront the military state. Nevertheless, it was apparent that the military had the upper hand and that a multi-class popular front had not evolved, nor were the guerrilla movements unified and integrated with the various labor, student or political movements. It was only in 1981, within the context of the upcoming national elections, the broad expression of bourgeois discontent at the prevailing military - civilian coalition, open criticism within the military, and the widespread rumors of an impending coup, that the impression of an extremely weak and factionalized bourgeois - military state was articulated. However, with the demobilization of the traditional forces of protest and organization within the national capital, the increasing intensity of the repression and guerrilla - military conflict in the Maya highlands, and the rural quiescence in the Ladino southeast and southwest, the specificity of the Maya peoples and the highlands to this continuing struggle could no longer be denied. The Maya became by fiat the "revolutionary subject" in a broader class war that pitted the "popular classes" and the armed expression of this movement, the URNG, in a protracted struggle against the continuation of military - bourgeois domination. The Maya had become depicted as the politically revolutionary class within Guatemalan society and were considered to be firmly committed to the overthrow of the existing state. In a surprising theoretical reversal, the ethnic discrimination and hostility that had formerly obscured "objective class relations," had acted as a secondary catalyst in promoting a revolutionary consciousness among the Maya peoples. Being the "most oppressed of the oppressed" granted the Maya a special status as agents of social change. The Maya's incorporation into the various guerrilla fronts, the unification of the guerrilla organizations under a centralized command structure, and the military's expanded and violent rural campaign, all suggested the development of a revolutionary context and "civil war" atmosphere more volatile than in neighboring El Salvador.

The undeniable centrality of the Maya as both participants in the largest guerrilla movement, the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), and as the target of the Guatemalan military, led to a number of reevaluations by both North American and Central American political analysts. What had to be explained was how the Maya were so quickly transformed from being "tradition bound and politically marginal" to the "revolutionary subject and armed protagonist" in a violent political conflict against the military state. The general thrust of these reevaluations was to restate former economic tendencies and to argue that these processes had occurred to a far greater extent in the Maya highlands than had formerly been surmised. Thus, one argument put forward was that the agro - export / subsistence production contradiction had become extremely acute, and that land scarcity had become an overwhelming problem for the Maya by the late 1970s.[66] A direct outcome of this land scarcity was the rapid proletarianization of the Maya in which many more communities had been forced to migrate to the coastal regions for wages in order to survive. This destablilization of the Maya subsistence economy, and the incipient initiatives to organize rural landless laborers, led to a radicalized consciousness.

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[66] For the view that land pressure led directly to armed revolution see Jefferey Paige, "Social Theory and Peasant Revolution in Vietnam and Guatemala," Theory and Society 12 (Nov., 1983) 699 - 737.

What further precipitated an overall Maya support for the guerrilla organizations and a revolutionary agenda was the military's increasingly repressive actions against political protest and organization. In this analysis the massacres at Panzós in 1978 and at the Spanish Embassy in 1980 became important factors in a broader Maya politicization, and were major events in the Maya gravitating towards armed insurrection against the military state. Thus, more repression had promoted organization and revolutionary actions. The direct correlation that was established between repression and resistance is an interesting assumption, given that the most renowned political theorist in Guatemala, Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, had documented for over ten years how the Guatemalan military's employment of state violence since the 1960s had been noticeably successful. Peralta had emphasized the degree to which this terror had entrenched a "deep psychological fear" within the Ladino civilian population, thus demobilizing and limiting the forces of opposition. It was also common knowledge that the most feared institution among the Maya people was the Guatemalan military.

Within the political analyses of this period, further support for this "class - revolution" interpretation was put forward by reexamining the anthropological studies of the 1970s. From these it was deduced that during the 1970s there had been an increased "class - differentiation" within the Maya communities of the highlands, suggesting that the community isolation, unity, and traditions had disintegrated to such a point that broader class - based forms of organization became possible.[67] In a sense, the lower classes across the Maya highlands had become more unified, making possible the revolutionary insurrection of the early 1980s. Within this class - dependency perspective, a response was proposed to Ricardo Falla's examination of a growing nationalist and political movement in the more prosperous Maya areas. The argument was that these "bourgeois sectors" had lost the leadership role they had assumed on behalf of the Maya to the revolutionary organizations in a class - based cause, intimating that in a few short years the general Maya populace had become far more politicized and radical than their nationalist brethren.[68] Hence, the general tendency was to emphasize the propitious circumstances for massive social change. This was based on the perception of an extremely fragmented and weak military - dominated state, and a volatile economic context in which the Maya majority became politicized and strong supporters of a revolutionary agenda. As noted, this interpretation arose in response to the military violence that engulfed the Maya highlands in the early 1980s. Until this time no political analysis had envisioned a violent revolutionary context developing in Guatemala, and certainly not within the confines of the Maya highlands.

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[67] See Jim Handy (1984), p. 244 - 250.

[68] Arturo Arias, "Changing Indian Identity: Guatemala's Violent Transition to Modernity," in Guatemalan Indians and the State, 1540 to 1988. Carol Smith, ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990) p. 230 - 257.

The rapidity with which the violence escalated and was expanded throughout the highlands, and the sketchy political and economic evidence that supported this perceived "revolutionary insurrection" against the military state, led to a considerable difference in opinion as to what was taking place in the Maya highlands. As political analysts stressed the extent to which Guatemala was undergoing a process of revolutionary transformation, those observers more attuned to the rural and ethnic composition of Guatemala argued that the highlands were being subjected to a vicious and unwarranted military assault. Anthropologists familiar with or recently active in the rural highlands claimed that the military had adopted a policy of genocide towards the Maya peoples that threatened specific linguistic groups with extinction. This position, though not denying the ongoing guerrilla - military conflict in the highlands, emphasized that the majority of Maya peoples were helplessly caught in the middle, and were neither supporters of the military or the guerrillas.[69] For these anthropologists the sequence of events that provoked such a violent outcome remained elusive, as neither the level nor types of Maya organization, and certainly not their ability to confront the Guatemalan military, were ever documented or observed. In fact, the very presence of the military had always elicited a great expression of fear and anxiety. Consequently, the anthropological position stressed the degree to which the military was indiscriminately attacking a defenseless population in order to end the guerrilla presence in the highlands.

This lack of a scholarly consensus as to what was taking place in Guatemala made possible the most direct challenge to the class - dependency's interpretation of contemporary events in the Maya highlands. A radically different interpretation of events was put forward in two separate articles published in the early 1980s by the anthropologist Carol Smith. It must be noted that the strength of Smith's interpretation, and its continuing validity, rests on the fact that Smith had been an active researcher in the Maya highlands for a ten year period. Smith had also previously published several articles that documented the changing economic conditions in the highlands and the types of economic relations that were emerging within and between regions. Several of these articles had already questioned the economic assumptions of the class - dependency perspective in reference to economic developments in the Maya highlands. What Smith argued was that by the mid-1970s fewer and fewer Maya families were relying on the agro-export sector for wages, even though their subsistence lands did not provide even half of the necessary food for survival. What made this possible was the increasing number of Maya families that were turning to petty commodity production and trade. These were economic activities which provided higher economic returns than seasonal wages, and enough to either supplement subsistence farming or to supplant it all together. Smith thus refutes the assumptions of "land scarcity" and "proletarianization" as factors leading to a Maya revolt. In place of these assumptions, Smith argues that the increase in petty commodity production became more generalized throughout the1970s and that this led to a significant labor shortage in the agro - export and industrial sectors. Petty commodity production had brought on a relative prosperity across the highlands that competed directly with the low wages and terrible conditions associated with seasonal employment (wages and conditions which the capitalist class refused to alter). In a critical response to the class - dependency perspective, Smith argued that the violence of the late 1970s was the Ladino bourgeoisie's political response to this labor shortage.

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[69] This impression was conveyed in a number of newspaper editorials, articles, and human rights reports from the period. See ad in New York Times, Jan. 3, 1984. Michael McClintock, The American Connection: Guatemala. (London: Zed Books, 1985) p. 256 - 259. Ricardo Falla, "We charge genocide," in Guatemala: Tyranny On Trial. Susanne Jonas et. al., eds., (San Francisco: Synthesis Publications, 1984) p. 112 - 120. Beatriz Manz, Refugees of a Hidden War. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

> Those who know little more about the economic life of Guatemala's Indians than that they make up the bulk of its plantation labor force have argued that revolution broke out in Guatemala in 1978-79 because Indian workers and peasants finally reached an economic breaking point. From what I know about the economic adaptations of Guatemala's Indians, I believe the opposite to be the case: Guatemala's capitalist class finally reached an economic breaking point. There was no danger of Guatemala's capitalists disappearing as a class or as a political force in Guatemala; but unless they could release a significant amount of labor from the Indian countryside - which they believed was rightfully theirs to exploit - they would not be able to take advantage of the new opportunities beginning to surface in the 1970s.[70]

What put the Maya in the forefront of an insurrectional movement then was the attack on the highlands by the military - bourgeios state, and not a radicalized consciousness promoted by economic conditions. Smith's thesis suggests that there was no political threat emerging in the highlands and that the Maya were not "revolutionary protagonists." Rather, the military initiated the assault on the highlands out of a combination of economic motivations, and the Maya were then forced into taking defensive measures against this attack on the highlands.

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[70] Carol Smith, "Labor and International Capital in the Making of a Peripheral Formation," in Labor In the Capitalist World Economy. C. Berquist, ed., (London: Sage Publications, 1984) p. 149. See also Carol Smith, "Local History In a Global Context: Social and Economic Transitions in Western Guatemala," Comparative Studies In Society and History. 26 (April, 1984) p. 193 -228.

By the mid 1980s three very different perspectives on the continuing violence in the Maya highlands had been elaborated, and each established a different understanding or set of reasons for the actions of the Guatemalan military state and the role of the Maya in the conflict. By 1984, the conflict began to wane as the guerrilla forces were in retreat and the military consolidated its position over the highlands, introducing a number of state structures that persist to this day. Of these structures the most notorious have been the Civil Defense Patrols (or civil patrols), overtly placed within the Maya highlands exclusively, and still under the direct control of the military. In 1985 the military permitted a certain degree of political party activity and national elections, and in 1986 allowed a civilian president to take office. This chain of events has done little to resolve the breakdown in a scholarly consensus surrounding contemporary political events in Guatemala.

It has been estimated that by 1985 some 100,000 people had been killed in the latest conflict initiated during the 1970s, another 200,00 or more had become refugees in neighboring Mexico and Belize, and over 1,000,000 people were internally displaced. In 1985 the Guatemalan military had 500,000 adults organized into civil patrols, and this number would double in the coming years. It is important to stress that these numbers pertain almost exclusively to the impact of the recent violence of the Maya peoples, and represent geographically the Maya highlands and not the Ladino populated rural and urban regions. In an attempt to understand this latest turn of events, such as the continuing military activity in the highlands, the extent of the "democratization" process underway, and the prevailing strengths or weaknesses of "civil society" versus the military, three distinct interpretations have persisted up until the present.

The most important position remains the class - dependency perspective, which has retained a "weak state" approach towards transformations at the national level. As noted previously, this perspective understood the massive military assault on the highlands to be a desperate reaction by the bourgeois - military state to an armed popular - revolutionary movement. The "scorched - earth" policy and the civil patrols initiated under General Ríos Montt and continued under General Mejía Víctores, were analyzed in terms of a vicious but a purely military, counter - insurgency strategy. In this perspective, it is argued that this strategy was temporarily successful in reducing the immediate threat to the state's survival, but ultimately the costs were high. Having radically disrupted the economy and taken on the image of a "pariah" state at the international level, the military was forced by a combination of internal and external pressures to implement a "democratization" or "civilianization" process. Since the counter - insurgency program had only served to exacerbate the existing economic and social contradictions in Guatemalan society, it is argued that the military had created conditions more conducive to revolutionary activity and organization. Hence, there is a persistent societal weakness in which the politics of "democracy" fosters the further destabilization of bourgeois - military domination. The main assumption underlying this view is that the "masses" or "popular classes" are only temporarily demobilized, but have retained a radicalized consciousness from the previous revolutionary experience. As is apparent, there is little or no recognition of the Maya - Ladino dynamic in this ongoing evaluation, nor a recognition that the Maya bore the brunt of the extreme military violence. Instead, the tendency has been to view this latest round of state violence as a further demonstration of the gradual escalation of state repression since the 1950s, concomitant with the supposed increase in political organization and revolutionary fervor among the popular classes due to capitalist development. This perspective has couched its analysis in strictly "class" concepts and strategic military terms. The strengths and weaknesses of "revolutionary" and "military - bourgeois" political forces are generally measured in terms of the level of violent conflict taking place at any one time.[71]

A second perspective, which originally stressed the "genocidal" or "ethnocidal" character of the military assault on the Maya highlands, has consistently denied the "revolutionary protagonist" image attributed to the Maya by the class - dependency perspective and the Guatemalan military. Having been more cognizant of the conflict in terms of the military attacking a defenseless indigenous population, and the cultural division within society, this perspective has attempted to document and describe the continuing destruction of the Maya culture and peoples due to the pervasive military presence in the highlands. As such, the argument is that the military's continued restructuring of the highlands represents an ongoing process of cultural destruction and devastation that did not end with the reduction in direct military force.[72] For a few of these observers, the extension of civil patrols is reminiscent of the initial Spanish conquest of the Americas. This latest phase of violence is thus, representative of an unfinished conquest project initiated 500 years ago whereby the physical and/or cultural liquidation of the Maya peoples is the motivation and desired goal of the military. In effect, the last decade has been a Ladino state effort at a violent "integration" of the Maya culture. The one main limitation of this perspective is in determining if this was a sufficient motivation for the military to undertake such a large scale restructuring project, and if it was, why it arose in this particular time period. Nevertheless, the thrust of this perspective is to articulate the cultural separation in Guatemalan society, and the degree to which the military violence during the 1980s has been far more extensive in comparison to the "political threat" emanating from the Maya highlands.

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[71] Susanne Jonas, The Battle For Guatemala (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991). Ken Anderson and Jean - Marie Simon, "Permanent Counterinsurgency in Guatemala," in Telos. No. 73 (Fall, 1987) p. 9 - 46. J. Patrice McSherry, "The Evolution of the National Security State: The Case of Guatemala," in Socialism and Democracy. No. 10 (Spring / Summer, 1990) p. 121 - 153. Susan Berger, Political and Agrarian Development In Guatemala. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992). Nelson Amaro, Guatemala: Historia Despierto. (Guatemala: IDESAC, 1992).

[72] Robert Carmack, ed., Harvest of Violence (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988). Pierre van den Berghe, "The Ixil Triangle: Vietnam in Guatemala," in State Violence and Ethnicity. P. van den Berghe, ed., (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1990). David Stoll, Between Two Armies In the Ixil Towns of Guatemala. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). Ricardo Falla, Massacres In the

A third perspective may be attributed to the combined works of the anthropologist Carol Smith. As outlined earlier, this researcher has posited a radically different interpretation as to why the military so strongly attacked the Maya highlands.[73] Although Smith has not gone back to strengthen her historical interpretation, she has held to a conception of military - civilian relations whereby the military is considered a "strong" or determinant force in shaping the economic and political context within Guatemalan society. This stands in contrast to the class - dependency perspective, which in retrospect, has advanced a somewhat confused analysis of the relationship between the military and the bourgeoisie. This has occurred to the extent that it is unclear who is subordinate in this relationship and who is more fragmented at any particular time. A second major departure by Smith has been to question the degree of national or state "dependency" in the case of Guatemala, and to demonstrate how a "military autonomy" and Maya forms of resistance have shaped the present state structure. This has led Smith to argue that the context of a counter - insurgency campaign provided the military with an opportunity to extend state control over the Maya highlands, destroying the political autonomy the Maya communities had preserved for many centuries. Rather than a "weak" state prevailing, Smith

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Jungle: Ixcán, Guatemala, 1975 - 1982. trans. by J. Howland (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994). Victor Perera, Unfinished Conquest. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

[73] Carol Smith and the class - dependency perspective share the view that there was a tight bourgeois - military alliance. As I will demonstrate in later chapters, the separation between the military and the specific agro-export bourgeoisie in question was complete by the mid 1970s, freeing the military to pursue a state directed development project that left the agro-export bourgeoisie in a subordinate political position. The placement of this military project within context of Maya - Ladino relations still strongly supports the conclusion that the military initiated the assault on the highlands, but does not support Smith's "labor shortage" theory.

views the militarization of the highlands and the existing military structures as stronger than ever before, but argues that this factor generates a greater possibility for revolution.

> Thus, while the state itself has grown stronger, in the sense of achieving greater infrastructural and despotic powers over time, it remains decidedly weak with respect to ideological (hegemonic) control. Since such states are inherently more vulnerable to and more likely to generate popular resistance, the possibilities for violent revolution remains high in Guatemala.[74]

Despite this prediction, Smith's own critique of the political left in Guatemala suggests that there is a considerable ideological and theoretical gap to be resolved by the Ladino left in relation to the "Maya question," if the revolutionary left is to take advantage of this socio - cultural situation. Hence, in a major reversal of political theory, Smith argues that the problem of the "revolution" in Guatemala is not the Maya, but the way in which the Ladino left *thinks* about the Maya. This implies that the most prevalent weakness on the Ladino political left is its inability to identify with Maya forms of resistance against the military state, rather than the Maya already being "revolutionary subjects" or still failing to understand their "class" standing.[75]

Although Carol Smith's research has established an important counter - perspective from within anthropolgy to the dominant political position of the class - dependency perspective, there remain both theoretical and historical discrepancies and limitations in her account. Theoretically, Smith has asserted a conflict model that poses the strength of the "Indian" communities against the strength of the State. This model relies heavily on an economistic interpretation of the "corporate community" referred to earlier, in explaining the ongoing political conflict. The limitation is that this perspective does not identify a specific "Maya ideology" or a "Maya cultural unity" that poses a threat to the "Ladino state." The political conflict is understood either in purely economic terms, or by reference to vague concepts such as "resistance," "autonomy," or "state control." The actual political implications of a cultural or ethnic division are not examined. A second theoretical limitation is that a "strong" or "autonomous" conception of the Guatemalan military does not resolve the question as to how this institution attained and retains this position, nor does it explain the coups and counter - coups that initially generated a "weak" conception of the military. In general, Smith has presented a distinct account of the economic developments in the Maya highlands, but she has not specified how the Maya culture and character continue to seperate this region from the culture and politics of the Ladino state. What is missing is an understanding of the cultural dimension as a basis for social and political conflict.

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[74] Carol Smith, "History and Revolution in Guatemala," in Guatemalan Indians and the State. Carol Smith, ed., (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990) p. 282.

[75] Carol Smith (1992) p. 189 - 212.

Conclusion

The intent of this chapter has been to demonstrate how the Maya of Guatemala have been the object of numerous theoretical and methodological interpretations, all of which have eviscerated, or denied the force of the Maya peoples and their culture within Guatemalan society. As this review has stressed, the degree of disparagement leveled against "all things Maya" has been relentless and unanimous from the political left to the political right, and from the most acute Maya specialists to the most sympathetic supporters of social and political change. The dominant social and political paradigms utilized this century have been shown to be particularly hostile to either the "sentimental Indianist" position or a "Maya centered" discussion. It is noteworthy that both perspectives have been considered to be grounded in "scientific" social principles. It is also important to emphasize that these theoretical positions on the Maya have not gone uncontested, but that these challenges have been sporadic and quickly dismissed or ignored.

Since the ascendancy of the class - dependency perspective was predicated on the refutation of the existent anthropological and sociological understanding of Guatemalan society, it is not surprising that the ethnocentric concepts and analysis of Guatemala were discarded. But the class - dependency perspective did not vindicate or present a Guatemalan identity based on its Maya heritage and present ethnic composition. The experience with U.S. imperialism, the "feudal - colonial" assessment by the Arbenz government, and the evolving "dependency" and "underdevelopment" theses preserved an impression among the class - dependency theorists that Guatemala was a "backward" nation. The Maya, or "Indians," remained as proof of this negative condition, and this majority was further burdened with the theoretical disdain of not living in a manner conducive to forwarding the revolution.

The works of Carol Smith and other anthropologists during the 1970s and 1980s have been decisive in altering the parameters of recent debates surrounding contemporary political events in Guatemala. This breakdown in a scholarly consensus is quite recent, and as yet it is unclear whether or not the initiation of a Maya - Ladino state debate will persist. Despite the recent attempt to revise the political - historical record and to accentuate a more comprehensive understanding of "culture and ethnicity" in Guatemala, this still remains a marginal perspective. The eventual strength of this approach depends partly on the emergence of this debate within contemporary Central American and Guatemalan academic and political spheres.

It is in the spirit of this more open and contentious debate that I will present a distinct historical account of the most recent phase of political violence, focusing specifically on the Maya peoples and the Guatemalan military. What will be advanced is a historically based approach, which I will define as a political - ethnic account of Guatemala. While critical of both the anthropological and class - dependency approaches, I intend to fully consider the economics, ideologies and politics of both the Ladino and Maya cultures. The argument I develop will analyze these factors historically, demonstrating the varied dimensions of this cultural separation and how it may best be understood as an ongoing conflict between two societies. A conceptual difference I will utilize is a discussion of the Maya as a "collectivity" with a common historical experience in relation to the Ladino dominated state, and not as disparate communities with Indian characteristics. This I believe is important as it exposes the numerous state structures (ideological, economic, political) peculiar to Guatemala that have not only perpetuated a political powerlessness among the Maya, but have been purposely constructed to prevent the emergence of a Maya political presence. The significance of the military within these structures becomes apparent, but is also revealed to be more complex, as the contours of a process of economic diversification are highlighted. It is by examining the dimensions and direction of economic development in Guatemala that it is possible to demonstrate why the military brutally attacked the Maya populace at the time that it did. This relationship, then, between the Maya and the military will be shown to have emerged as the definitive economic, social and political conflict in recent Guatemalan history.

Chapter Two

The Ethnic Character of Guatemala's Capitalist Development

Possibly the most important factor that I attempted to highlight in my review of twentieth century theorization pertaining to the Maya within Guatemalan society, was the fact that the Maya have never been considered theoretically as a "political subject," or depicted as "political subjects." Mostly this reflected an inherent bias within the theories utilized, but just as understandably the fact that the Maya had not represented themselves as a unified political and social collectivity. The "scientific" assumption that they were but disparate "Indian" communities is not surprising given that the Maya peoples had been dispersed between the nations of Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize, and that within Guatemala they were further divided linguistically, geographically and even between communities at the regional level. Although the definition of the Maya as simply generic "Indian" communities can be contested, the depiction of the Maya themselves as dispersed and fragmented is not in dispute. What is largely missing from this interpretation, though, is a conceptualization of the various dimensions of the ethnic relations between the Maya and the Ladinos within Guatemala. It is from within this set of relations, when examined historically, that we may discern the specific "politics" or political dynamics of being either Maya or Ladino. Hence, although it is only very recently that a particular "Maya nationalism" has developed, the political aspects or "politics" of being Maya are still revealed through the thinking and actions of the Ladino - dominated state (government, culture, economy). It will be shown that Ladino society, or more precisely the Ladino elite, has always held a political understanding of the Maya peoples and how they should be dealt with as "political subjects." What will be argued here is that it is not the Maya peoples per se, through their culture, language and religion, that have fostered the separation between Maya and Ladino. In reviewing the dominant social and political theory on Guatemala of this century, what has been most misguided about the approaches has been the tendency to highlight the limitations to "national integration" or "class unity" imposed supposedly from within the Maya culture itself. Rather, it is the active political - economic thought and practices of Ladino society which have perpetuated this discriminatory separation, fostering a separateness throughout all levels of Guatemalan society based on being either Ladino or "Indian." Furthermore, in order to understand the peculiar strength of the Ladino dominance over the Maya in the twentieth century, it is not necessary to return to the initial Spanish conquest of the isthmus for insight, but only to the late 1800s. It was in this period, and particularly after 1871, in which a new and truly capitalist economic project was inaugurated by the Ladino - dominated government and elite. It will be demonstrated that despite the varied and available options for economic development in

Guatemala during the 1800s, the Ladino elite of the time chose a path that most fully demarcated a Ladino - Maya *racial* separation.

A Critique of the Theory On Maya Identity

Before entering into a historical examination of these developments, it is important to reexamine some of the approaches and positions that have been advanced pertaining to exactly what the "Maya" represent within studies of Guatemalan history and how this culture has been evaluated by scholars. This will highlight some of the complexities surrounding the study of Guatemalan history generally, and how the subject of the "Maya" has been approached and integrated within a broader understanding of Guatemala's "national history." The central issue is whether or not there exists a specific Maya identity or culture with an identifiable force or effect on Guatemala's historical development, and if there is, to what degree it can be said to be a determinant factor in any given period of time. It must be stressed that the dominant position of political - historical studies since the early 1960s has been either to note briefly the existence of an "Indian" majority while intimating that no significant "national" ramifications arise from this factor, or to simply disregard this ethnic factor altogether by subsuming the Maya majority under a "peasantry" or "seasonal worker" social class category (thus disregarding the diversity and complexity of economic and social positions in the rural countryside) and obliterating the relevance of the Maya - Ladino distinction. This position among political historians stems largely from the fact that one is able to document and analyze all major trends and events of this century within Guatemala (up until 1980) with little or no reference to the specific character or significance of the Maya majority. Such events as the overthrow of the Ubico dictatorship, the 1944 - 54 "revolution," the U.S. intervention in 1954, the growth of the guerrilla movement during the 1960s, and the political dominance of the military throughout the 1970s, may all be described and analyzed as the important "national" developments which do not require reference to any recognizable Maya involvement or debate about the "Indian problem" at the national level.

This tendency is not due to a lazy or an intentional effort on the part of political - historians to ignore or deprecate the existence of the Maya majority. What it does represent is the fact that the specific geographical regions and individual or institutional actors that have constituted contemporary Guatemalan "history" have, by and large, been Ladino - dominated regions (namely the capital city of Guatemala but also the rural southeast and southwest), Ladino figures, and Ladino - dominated institutions (political parties, presidents, guerrillas, popular movements, unions, students, military). There are several implications that arise from this tradition, the most important being that we are left with an intellectual legacy with no appreciable understanding of the dimensions and consequences of the ethnic or "racial" separation within Guatemalan society. As a consequence, the political history of Guatemala has been largely about the left - right ideological conflict within specific Ladino - dominated regions of Guatemala, and the role of the United States in altering the balance of Ladino forces involved in this conflict. This has left the impression that Guatemalan society in total could be readily divided into clearly understood class and ideological categories. This was not a theoretical problem until the 1980s when the military - guerrilla conflict became centered directly in the northern highlands of Guatemala, where the majority of the Maya population has resided for centuries. As described in the previous chapter, this led to a disintegration in scholarly agreement concerning events leading up to and during this latest phase of state violence. It is specifically the formation, dimensions, and political consequences of the ethnic separation that I will attempt to explicate in this thesis and present as central to an understanding of Guatemala in its entirety. This requires not only a renewed emphasis on the history of specific regions e.g. the Maya highlands, but also an examination of the relations and dynamics between various regions based on ethnic composition and political - economic activity. What this will demonstrate is the prominence of regional and ethnic factors which have served to belie either the ideal of "social integration" or a united "revolutionary class." This ethnic - regional approach, I believe, will yield a distinct evaluation of the contemporary political and economic scene and of the most recent phase of political violence.

For those disciplines and scholars within anthropology, cultural geography, history, and sociology which have singled out the Maya peoples and their culture as a factor in Guatemalan history, the most problematic and controversial issue has been that of defining how the Maya are constituted and how their culture is to be evaluated. This issue has evolved over time in relation either to the political context at the national level or the dominant academic theorization, thus changing the criteria on which to base the existence of this "culture" or "identity" and those factors that have served to alter or maintain it in a form distinctively "Maya" in contrast to the Spanish - Ladino culture. What is most striking about the dominant theorization employed in understanding and evaluating the Maya culture by those who have discerned a "Maya culture" is the fact that these theories have evaluated this culture in terms of how it must be altered and diminished in order to meet the requirements of some higher theoretical or socio-political standard. What is also curious about this variant of thinking is that it has been consistent throughout this century and within several dissimilar disciplines (notably anthropology, sociology, history), and from across the ideological spectrum (from the political left to the political right both within and outside of Guatemala).

There are three major perspectives that have been utilized to understand and evaluate the Maya culture as a persistent historical phenomenon, an "essentialist," a "colonial historicist," and a "corporate community" perspective.[76] The "essentialist" position was put forward by two of the most influential scholars of Mesoamerican studies, Sol Tax and Eric Wolf. Sol Tax emphasized the extent to which 20th - century Maya culture (languages, attire, political - religious practices, agricultural life) and the Maya community identification represented a link to the pre-conquest era. Eric Wolf approached this question of a "Maya culture" from a different angle, arguing that the Maya communities were "closed, corporate, peasant communities" that "developed primarily in response to colonial and later capitalist economic conditions, not from direct survivals of pre-Hispanic Maya traditions."[77] As John Watanabe points out, both these approaches shared a "common essentialist perception of Maya culture and community."[78] "[W]hether defined mentallistically or institutionally, an essential 'Indianess' infused these outward cultural and social forms."[79] As Watanabe adds, "[I]ronically, the more clearly that anthropologists defined this Indianness in terms of essential traits or institutions, the more vulnerable the Maya seemingly became to the ongoing changes that so obviously shaped their lives."[80] As a consequence, it was argued that due to a combination of internal factors (population growth, land shortages, wealth and power distributions) and external factors (demand for Maya labor, national politics, influence of religious groups) these "essential" characteristics of the Maya would inevitably erode and disappear. The Maya culture would give way to, or become subsumed by, the dominance and appeal of Ladino culture.

The later "colonial historicist" approach, largely Marxist in orientation, took exception to this "essentialist" understanding of the Maya peoples and culture. They argued that the term "Indian" and the "Indian culture" were constructions of the Spanish colonial order. The "colonial historicist" approach varies in intensity from those who hold that the Maya culture is a total fabrication and a "poor culture" i.e. Severo Martínez Peláez, to those who see the "Indian" distinction as simply obscuring "objective relationships" between classes.[81] Nevertheless, they share the view that the Maya culture is a "colonial holdover," and a negative one at that, to the extent it supposedly prevents the creation of conditions conducive to class warfare. Ultimately, capitalist development would render impotent these cultural illusions. Watanabe provides an excellent overall critique of both the "essentialist" and "historicist" positions:

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[76] The first two categorizations and reviews are from John Watanabe, Maya Saints and Souls. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992). The third is my own categorization and review.

[77] Ibid., p. 6.

[78] Ibid., p. 6.

[79] Ibid., p. 6. Watanabe makes an important point regarding Eric Wolf's perspective, noting that Wolf used the "corporate community" as a Weberian construct and not with a notion of "active resistance" as later researchers i.e. Carol Smith, were to use this concept.

[80] Ibid., p. 6.

[81] This historical - political position has its counterpart in anthropology through the works of John Hawkins. Hawkins argues that there is only one culture in Guatemala, the Maya simply being an "inverse image" of

> Polemics aside, these essentialist and historicist approaches more often than not complemented each other in their insights as well as their errors. Cultural essentialists correctly stressed the importance of ongoing differences in interpersonal relations, attitudes, and values in shaping distinct Maya communities, but they tended to assume a static view of Maya culture itself: distinguished by dress, language, livelihood, place of residence, economic status, and local institutions, the Maya themselves would disappear as they acculturated to Ladino ways. Conversely, historicists rightfully perceived the colonial trappings and dialectical nature of the opposition between Indian and Ladino, but they often reduced this opposition strictly to an artifact of colonialist domination: Maya culture and community became, at best, empty tokens of ideological resistance; at worst, blind, ultimately pernicious, self-deception or false consciousness. Implicitly or explicitly, both approaches portrayed the Maya as fundamentally passive - either the stoic survivors of a fading past or the hapless victims of an unjust present. In the end, whether through acculturation, proletarianization, or even revolution, the Maya would inevitably succumb to the Ladino world.[82]

As Watanabe observes in his review, later community studies of the Maya in Guatemala during the 1970s, '80s, and '90s, have refuted rather than supported the foreshadowing of either of these perspectives.

By the late 1970s this combination of evidence from various community studies and the continuing cultural diversity in the Maya highlands led some researchers, notably the anthropologist Carol Smith, to question the overall impact or strength of "global economic forces" and "modernization" on the Maya. This led to a revamped utilization of Eric Wolf's "corporate community" concept but unlike Wolf's usage, the emphasis was on the "resistance" qualities of the Maya communities against proletarianization, capitalist development, and later the "Ladino State."[83] Smith has utilized this more "activist" conception of the "corporate community" in a historical account of the Maya highlands, specifically the Western highlands, in arguing that by "opening" and "closing" in relation to capitalist expansion and the Ladino State,

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the Spanish - Ladino culture. John Hawkins, Inverse Images: The Meaning of Culture, Ethnicity, and Family in Postcolonial Guatemala. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984).

[82] J. Watanabe (1992), p. 8.

[83] See Carol Smith's articles, "Local History in Global Context: Social and Economic Transitions in Western Guatemala," Comparative Studies In Society and History. 26, 2 (April, 1984) p. 193 - 227, and "History and Revolution in Guatemala," in Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1540 - 1988. Carol Smith, ed., (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990) p. 258 - 285.

the Maya have successfully preserved a separate identity and community structure. In her later work Smith has posited an even stronger notion of "community resistance" with the perspective of a regional autonomy confronting Ladino State penetration, arguing that this establishes superior conditions for "revolutionary activity" than the emphasis on "social class."[84] The previous "essentialist" and "historicist" perspectives have come under increasing scrutiny recently, but it is in the more "activist" account put forward by Smith that there is room to question the nature of the "resistance" that supposedly emanates from the Maya highlands. Smith's understanding of the Maya communities is generally an economistic interpretation of the Maya highlands. Smith's perspective does not provide us with an understanding of the depth of the obstacles established by Ladino culture and the hostility the Maya confront in their efforts to keep their communities intact. As this chapter will begin to demonstrate, the cultural - economic condition of the Maya is extremely precarious, given the history of Maya - Ladino relations in the countryside. This is not to deny the "resistance" of the Maya, only to demonstrate that the forms of resistance have not been commensurate to the force displayed by Ladinos. This has not been the fault of the Maya, but reflects the real character of Ladino culture.

Although these three main positions have been extremely valuable for providing us with insights into the character of colonial Guatemalan society, 20th century Maya community life, and an economic and social history of the highlands, what they have failed to adequately address is how the racism towards the Maya by the Ladinos has been constituted, the forces that perpetuate it, and the reasons why it is pervasive across all classes within the Ladino ethnic group. What we have had then from within some disciplines, is a specific recognition of the "Indian" character of Guatemala, which is a marked improvement over the standard political - historical approach, but not a historically based understanding of Maya - Ladino ethnic relations and particularly the dimensions and implications of the racism towards the Maya. At a more concrete level the question I am asking as a political scientist, investigating a country with a recognizable indigenous majority, is why this majority is not either governing the country or at least readily apparent at all levels of society and in all political, cultural, religious, and economic institutions, e.g. political parties, political institutions, banking, industry, courts, public administration, large land owners, or within the officer class of the military. This is not a question that is concerned directly with why Guatemala is not a functioning liberal or social democratic political system, although, as I will demonstrate later, the way in which Maya - Ladino relations have been constructed bears directly on this issue and the specific political institutions and organizations that have been in place during this century. The "democracy" question is secondary to the extent that there is no reason why Guatemala could not be a military or civilian dictatorship while still having an even or disproportionate level of Maya representation throughout all levels of society.

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[84] C. Smith (1990), p. 282.

This brings us back to the question of why the Maya - Ladino distinction is not simply a set of "cultural differences" where two peoples co-exist, but has been rather a relationship of real and overt political - economic domination and the continuing dominance of one cultural group over another. For decades now, those scholars and disciplines that have recognized the Maya and the Maya - Ladino distinction as an important feature of Guatemalan society have focused on and analyzed almost exclusively the cultural dimension, particularly the many facets of Maya community organization and activity. As anthropologists, sociologists, historians, or Ladino political organizations, they have all identified within the Maya culture important features that are supposedly in need of revision or termination in order for Guatemala to be a better society, whether it be a more integrated society or the creation of a broader class unity. As a consequence, the majority of intellectual and theoretical evaluations have been leveled directly against the Maya culture and its failure to ascribe to, or support, some set of demands within these theoretical constructs. What is most curious about this tendency is that it has posited without explanation or under spurious criteria, a set of standards i.e. modernization, civilization, "class unity," proletarianization, from which to denigrate either important features of Maya culture or the whole Maya way of life. However, upon examining the various aspects of what has constituted the Maya culture, one has to wonder what has provoked such broad intellectual animosity. The main attributes of Maya culture that have been identified in differentiating the "Indians" from the Spanish -Western heritage are: the predominance of the Maya languages, encompassing at least 22 separate linguistic groups; religious practices and observances, generally a syncretism of Catholic and Maya traditions; strong community identification versus "the nation," and placement throughout the rural areas; strongly - maintained agricultural and artisanal practices; and the persistence of specific Maya attire (particularly among the women) that has served to differentiate the Maya communities in relation to Ladino - Western fashion. When one reviews the anthropological sources on the numerous dimensions of Maya cultural life, their political - religious organizations at the local level, the structure of family and community life, the numerous economic activities engaged in by the Maya communities, and the intricate indigenous marketing system, one finds that there is absolutely nothing inherent in this culture that poses a threat to the existent Spanish culture. The structure of their political - religious activity, their types of economic activity, and the various Maya trade practices, are neither predatory nor expansionist. What is most evident is that there are no qualities or dimensions of Maya culture which cannot be accommodated, and perhaps enhanced, under several different political forms (liberal or social democratic, conservative, dictatorial regime, communist). As a result, the Maya languages, religious practices, and forms of political and economic organization are all capable of being accommodated and are not a barrier to full Maya political participation in this nation. So why have the Maya and their culture been the target of such continual vilification from both inside and outside of Guatemala in this century? Why has the option for "bettering" Guatemalan society consisted of diminishing or destroying the Maya culture? What is it that makes being an "indian" or a Ladino in this nation not just a simple difference in terms of cultural practices and beliefs, but a striking contrast in terms of economic and political positions? The answer is revealed more completely by examining the thinking and practices of the Spanish - Western tradition in relation to the Maya, than within any essential attributes pertaining to the Maya themselves. As such, it is this larger and more influential tradition that has constructed the positive aspects of being Ladino and the negative aspects of being Maya or "*indito*." A critical examination also demonstrates the degree to which these cultural attributes have important political implications by determining and legitimizing how the Ladino - Western culture relates to the Maya.

An excellent example of this form of scholarly investigation and evaluation is Severo Martínez's scathing critique of the monolingualism among the numerous Maya linguistic groups.[85] Although Martínez is able to suggest, due to a lack of tangible evidence, that several important characteristics of the Maya culture are but a "colonial manifestation" created during the Spanish conquest of the region, i.e. dress and community identification, the persistent use of the indigenous languages are a clear link between the pre- and post- conquest eras. This Martínez cannot deny. Martínez's critique thus applies a much different standard in denigrating the languages of what he believes to be a "poor" and inferior culture.

> The monolingualism, the exclusive use of the indigenous language with no knowledge of the official language of the regime, was a grave factor of weakness for the Indian, which favored in very diverse forms their oppressors. Not only because the use of less developed idioms determined a decisive inferiority of conceptual resources; nor because the idiomatic barrier accentuated the distance between the antagonistic classes with benefit to the dominant group; nor because justice, conceived by the dominator and written in his idiom,

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[85] Severo Martínez Peláez, La Patria del Criollo. 9th ed., (Costa Rica: EDUCA, 1983). I have singled out Martínez's work because his work is influential and often uncritcally cited. It is also a standard history text in Guatemalan schools. It should come as a surprise that a Marxist historian has such a captured audience in contemporary Guatemala, but this anti - Maya scholarship reflects precisely the real concerns the Ladinos have with Guatemala's modern condition and the "radical" character of Martínez's work.

> faded still more between court clerks and interpreters who conspired against the indian; nor simply because the idiomatic difficulty gave cause for all class of abuses in the work setting, in the assessments, in commercial transactions, etc, but because, without taking away all that has been said, the diversity of languages maintained divisions between the indians themselves, fomented "localisms," obstructed the formation of their class conscience, and favored, in addition, the colonial intention to prevent their free movement from one place to another.[86]

The disdain for the Maya generally is more than a little apparent in this excerpt, but in addition, the critique is wholly misplaced. Martinez, as with all other scholars, can find nothing inherently "wrong" with the Maya languages.[87] What is considered wrong is really only of a secondary consequence, as the monolingualism has been utilized to the advantage of those who have kept the Maya oppressed and exploited. But surely this is not the fault of the Maya but a basis from which to examine and critique the thinking and practices of the oppressors. Why should the Maya be responsible for the ways in which they are oppressed? Martínez adds to this evaluation the assumption that monolingualism among the Maya has been a significant but misguided expression of Maya "resistance" to their Spanish exploiters, but again this is another misrepresented criticism. In the historical record there is little evidence of the Spanish - Ladino elite ever extending the opportunity for "castellinization" or Spanish instruction. In fact, evidence from this century suggests that the Ladinos, or Spanish speakers, have long recognized that their own economic and political advantages over the Maya have resided in their fluency in Spanish to the exclusion of the Maya. Consequently, the extension of Spanish literacy to the Maya has not been without controversy within Ladino circles of all economic classes, demonstrating how language has had a purely instrumental usage by Ladinos in perpetuating their political and economic domination over the Maya. Why is it then that Martínez does not attack the reprehensible tactics of the oppressor rather than the culture of the oppressed? For Martínez the reason is because the Spanish oppressor in Guatemalan society is fulfilling a historically important and vital role.

> ....a revolutionary conception of the Indian is not able to fall within the fetishism of their culture, and less to remain looking backwards, for the following reason: the development of societies reveals in our time a tendency to universalization, to the unification of the great progressive currents of science, technology, and politics, in a manner that the realizations of Humanity in these fields tend to convert - by necessary imperative from men and by work from the increasing interchange - into factors of well-being every time more generalized, in an inheritance from all Humanity. That tendency is not only visible, but is desirable; the

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[86] Ibid., p. 599.

[87] Martínez shows no understanding of the Maya languages from which to suggest that they are "inferior" linguistic forms for grasping conceptually the workings of nature or human society.

> revolutionary impulse favors it. The development of the indians of Guatemala, necessarily conceived in the dynamic of the classes in which they are found distributed, since they never have belonged to only one class - and in the general development of the society of which they form a part, implies their increasing contact with world development, especially the technology. Said contact must seem undesirable to those who need for their benefit the endurance of the indian - and with them who desire the conservation of their culture with the maximum "purity" - but it must not be a motive of affliction for them who observe it from revolutionary ideological positions. The revolution supposes theoretically, among its motivating perspectives, an accelerated incorporation of the benefits of contemporary science and technology in favor of the social sectors that actually don't procure such benefits.[88]

It is of historical necessity that the Maya culture must ultimately be destroyed. The Maya languages, Maya patterns of dress, and Maya cosmology are wholly incompatible with the demands of scientific and technological progress that will eventually form the "class" for the Revolution.

Clearly Martínez's estimation of Maya culture proceeds from a mechanistic and reductionist conception of history in which the logical consequences of his argumentation are quite explicit in relation to the Maya. Maya culture, by its nature, has been a negative societal force whereas those capitalist forces that have taken advantage of and ruthlessly exploited this cultural diversity are not in any way culpable. They have simply done what is expected "historically" of capitalists in forwarding Guatemala's economic - technological progress, and this has been a necessary requirement for the next historical phase of revolutionary social change. Thus, even identified forms of Maya resistance are denigrated as misguided and reactionary attempts in confronting "proletarianization" and "ladinoization." For Martínez, the Maya animosity towards Ladino - Western society is misdirected and suggests to him that the Maya do not comprehend or understand the nature of their oppression, having failed to grasp the intricacies of his scientific Marxism, whereas their Ladino class counterparts supposedly have a clear and in - depth understanding of this oppression. Given the ingrained racism within Guatemala's "national" school system and political organizations, it is beyond this observer how the Maya were to ever have learned the "wisdom" that Martínez so flagrantly utilizes to condemn them. Martínez postulates the most spurious of criteria from which to justify his condemnation of Maya culture. At a superficial level there is no evidence to suggest that the Maya culture is incompatible with technological and scientific progress, and in fact, those Maya communities that have been afforded these opportunities have been very successful in utilizing these advances to their economic and social benefit (again the obstruction lies within the Ladino domain).

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[88] Ibid., p. 608.

Secondly, there is no evidence to suggest that culturally homogenous societies have been any more successful at implanting a revolutionary tradition than culturally diverse nations, and hence, Martínez's attack on "Maya culture" appears to be more racially motivated than a practical attempt at understanding class and ethnic divisions in Guatemalan society. At a deeper level, Martínez holds an extremely naive faith in the "neutrality" of capitalist production and progress as a force capable of neutralizing the significance of Guatemala's ethnic diversity (at the total expense and supposed benefit to the Maya), without realizing that an ethnic discrimination and an economic exploitation based on ethnicity are fully compatible with rapid economic and scientific progress (South Africa being the most obvious example). In fact, Martínez's whole conception of progress rests on the assumption that capitalist expansion will create a "free labor" force and a "liberal" economic and legal regime, i.e. ability to move and organize freely, unencumbered by colonial affectations or more precisely, the Maya culture. Despite all of this glorification of the Ladino proletariat and the union movement (which has been largely based in Guatemala City) one has to ask why it is that this same proletariat, which has been able to secure a measure of legal protection, health care, pensions and other benefits, has not gone the extra step to organize and identify with those Maya workers who constitute the vast majority performing the most degrading work in the rural agro - export sector. Perhaps these important Ladino sectors are not as well versed in scientific Marxism as Martínez assumes.

What is remarkable about this mechanistic - historical interpretation is the extent to which it is deeply imbued with the integrationist - modernization assumptions of which Martínez himself is so critical. All that has been added is one more historical phase (socialist) and a celebration of proletarianization rather than liberal - democratic institutions. Like the modernization perspective, Martínez's understanding of contemporary Guatemalan history is bereft of a political discourse concerning ethnic relations and capitalist development. Martínez's work is revealing to the extent that it demonstrates what passes as "serious scholarship" and "ground - breaking theory" on the Maya within the Ladino - Western tradition. Behind this Western standard utilized to evaluate a culture, lies a reprehensible moral position which extols and endorses a politics of cultural extermination. Martínez's argumentation remains, then, just another variant in a long Spanish - Ladino tradition that is repulsed by the cultural diversity expressed by the Maya without understanding how their own economic - ideological history has fostered this cultural animosity. It is this form of "cultural critique" that is misplaced and fails to extirpate the truly negative and vicious aspects of the Ladino - Maya distinction in Guatemala, all of which reside within the thinking and practices of what constitutes the modern Spanish - Ladino nation. What this thesis will highlight is the extent to which capitalist development, ethnic discrimination, and an oppression based on ethnicity are all wholly compatible and advantageous not just for the specific bourgeois class in power, but for the dominant cultural group as a whole. It is only from this perspective that we may understand what appears to be an enduring "cultural" separation between Maya and Ladinos at all levels of Guatemalan society. It is only in this manner that we may begin to discern what are the "essential" or defining characteristics of the Maya peoples, and what are the historically - created societal structures that perpetuate a discrimination against the Maya.

The Maya and Guatemala's Coffee Industry

In order to understand both the basis and the dimensions of the Ladino - Maya separation that has persisted throughout this century, it is necessary to understand the composition and the character of the Spanish - Ladino agrarian bourgeoisie that emerged in the latter half of the 19th century. This nascent agrarian bourgeoisie began to establish its fortune, status, and political power on the production of coffee for the international market, a commodity which at the time was in great demand in Europe and thus commanded a high price. It must be emphasized that there is nothing specific about the nature of coffee production and processing itself that leads to the levels of exploitation peculiar to the coffee industry in Guatemala (and to a lesser degree in other Central and South American countries). Instead , what must be examined is the way in which this industry was introduced and the forms of land tenure and labor recruitment that were established. This particular coffee bourgeoisie was able to ruthlessly impose an agrarian development strategy that radically altered the existing rural social structure and secured the dominance of the coffee industry for over 100 years. With its own representatives firmly installed as the "national government," this new class was to foster the greatest separation and strongest conflictual identities associated with being either Ladino or "Indian" and enforced these throughout every level of Guatemalan society. This is not to suggest that this development in the late 1800s implies that the specific "Maya" or "Indian" identity has been wholly constructed by the Ladino bourgeoisie to its advantage, with the "Maya" being a socially created or largely "contextual" entity. As will be documented, prior to the emergence of this coffee bourgeoisie there were numerous social and cultural distinctions to be drawn between the Maya and Ladino populations, namely religious practices and observances, linguistic differences, attire, social customs and community identities that persist to this day. What the introduction of coffee production facilitated was the determined effort on the part of this new and aggressive bourgeoisie to forcefully expand these existing cultural or ethnic differences throughout the emergent economic and political realms within Guatemala, thus establishing a clear separation at all levels of society between Maya and Ladino. It is within these latter realms, and not in the former, that we find the real advantages to being Ladino, and the disadvantages of being "Indian" in Guatemalan society.

The evidence to demonstrate how capitalist development redefined the meanings related to specific ethnic groups in Guatemala is most readily available from examining the economic and political changes that Guatemala underwent in the latter half of the 19th century. The first half of this century was defined by the independence of Mexico and Central America from Spain, followed by a protracted period of civil wars in an effort to hold together a federation of Central American nations. This pitted the Liberals against the Conservatives, in which Guatemala was a bastion of Conservative strength in the isthmus.

> ...the bloody civil war from 1826 to 1829 left the country weak and divided. Liberal victory in that struggle behind the leadership of the Honduran General Francisco Morazán resulted in the imprisonment and exile of prominent conservative leaders and clergy, setting the stage for the Liberals to launch their economic and political reforms. José Francisco Barrundia came to typify most especially the liberal radicals that led the Liberal effort in the 1820s and 1830s to transform the former Spanish colony into a progressive, modern state. He pressed this forward under the administration of Dr. Mariano Gálvez, Governor of Guatemala from 1831 to 1837.[89]

Although Gálvez's Liberal administration was short - lived before being overthrown by Conservative forces, it set about attacking what was at the time the primary target of Liberal animosity, namely the economic and political power of the Catholic Church. To this end, Gálvez confiscated Church property and funds, expelled religious orders, authorized civil marriages, legalized divorce, brought education under state control, and instituted a legal framework that emphasized equality before the law. The failure of this initial Liberal political - economic project reflected the small number of participants actually involved with inaugurating this Liberal vision, versus the larger but just as popularly remote Conservative forces. This configuration of political forces had a direct relationship to the ethnic composition of Guatemalan society as it moved out of the colonial era towards national independence.

In the early 19th century the ethnic composition of Guatemalan society was typified by three fairly distinct ethnic groups corresponding to three different categories of economic activity, opportunity, and regional placement.[90] The most economically and politically powerful ethnic group was the white Peninsular and Creole elite of pure Spanish blood, who were either born in Spain or descendants of the Spanish colonial aristocracy in Guatemala. This group, though small in numbers, represented a mix of powerful but antagonistic economic forces. They included the personnel hierarchy of the Catholic Church, former colonial administrators, large land owners, financiers, and merchants (importers - exporters). It is within this small clique alone that the political and economic conflicts between a "Liberal" and "Conservative" agenda took place. The general populace was composed largely of two other distinguishable ethnic groups: the Maya, and the Mestizos (the latter was to later compose the largest percentage of the Ladino population). The Maya population was dispersed throughout the north and south-east of Guatemala, but concentrated most heavily in the western and central highlands, and as a whole represented some 60% - 70% of the total population. The Mestizo ethnic group was comprised of those individuals who were the products of an earlier and ongoing Maya - Spanish *mestizaje* or of "mixed blood." The Mestizos were located mainly in and around Guatemala City and in the south-eastern region of Guatemala. Despite the fact that the Penninsular - Creole elite looked upon both these groups as one large "inferior" mass, there were important differences between the Maya and the Mestizos in terms of economic status and political allies. The largest percentage of Maya, who resided in the north and central highlands, had remained since the initial colonial period largely undisturbed by Spanish intervention and were extended a certain degree of legal protection by the Catholic Church. As a consequence, the Maya of this vast region had retained to a great extent their numerous cultural traditions, and more importantly their community structure and communal land holdings. This afforded them the ability to continue a healthy agricultural, artisanal and marketing economy.

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[89] Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr., "Changes in the Ninteenth - Century Guatemalan State and Its Indian Policies," in Carol Smith, ed., (1990) p. 59 - 60.

[90] Carol Smith, "Origins of the National Question In Guatemala: A Hypothesis," in Carol Smith, ed., (1990). The following section works with and expands on C. Smith's hypothesis concerning ethnic relations during the 1800s.

> Their (the Maya) isolation not only permitted them to do away with vices introduced by the colonists, designed to deprave them and make them more vulnerable, but to increase their agricultural productivity on the basis of their tradition of communal labor. This occurred chiefly in those regions not readily accessible to Conservative authorities. A European visiting one of these communities noted with astonishment their high organizational level. He discovered that no one drank liquor or played cards. Instead of finding the "*savages*" he had been warned about in the Capital, he encountered "*industrious and hard - working men*" who could produce in a given year 45,000 quintals of corn, 5,000 quintals of black beans, 32,000 quintals of wheat, 1,500 quintals of potatoes, and 20,000 pounds of fleece.[91]

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[91] J. C. Cambranes, Coffee and Peasants In Guatemala. (Stockholm: Institute for Latin American Studies, 1985) p. 41 - 42. One "quintal" is equal to roughly 100 lbs. On the diversity of Maya agriculture and on community autonomy in this period see also the articles by David McCreery and Robert Carmack in Carol Smith, ed., (1990).

In contrast, the Mestizo population represented the outcast or "lowest" social class in Guatemalan society. Notwithstanding their fluency in Spanish, they were despised by the Spanish elite and lacked any special status from the Church, leaving them predominantly landless and impoverished. Many were forced to survive as tenant farmers or indentured and coerced laborers. Life was particularly hard for the Mestizos given that they lacked the resources to acquire land and had no formal community structure, and also, due to the fact that the south - eastern region was an area of increasing economic stagnation during the decades of independence. What is important to emphasize here is that the Mestizos, who were to later be more generally referred to as "Ladinos," occupied a social position which today we identify with the general lot of the Maya. Hence, there is no truth to the view that the Maya have been the group in the most subordinate social position since the conquest. Rather we must examine not only the economic transformation that took place at the end of the 19th century, but the whole ideological and political transformation that took place and reconceptualized the role of the Maya and the Mestizos in Guatemalan society.

The southeast region of Guatemala was a region with a unique history relative to the rest of Guatemala, in the sense that the types of agricultural activity possible in this region and the Maya - Spanish contact and co-existence over the centuries had dissolved to a degree the cultural and racial separateness of being "Indian" or "Spanish." It was from this region that Rafael Carrera (a Mestizo whom the Spanish elite were to denigrate as an "Indian") led a revolt against Gálvez's Liberal administration, capturing power in 1839 and retaining control until his death in 1865. Despite the duration of time in which Carrera was able to maintain power, Carrera and his regime are still somewhat enigmatic in terms of attaching an ideological label. The debate surrounds the extent to which we may say that Carrera actually "protected" the Maya populace or if the Maya simply flourished due to a weak governmental structure. This also involves determining Carrera's role in fomenting or obstructing the incipient coffee export industry. What is certain is that Carrera's initial rise to power, and his ability to remain in power, were fraught with instability and only maintained through shifting ethnic - regional coalitions for regime support.

> Carrera did not actually take formal power until 1844, abdicated in the face of new uprisings in eastern Guatemala among his former followers (the Lucíos) in 1848, and then took power "for life" again in 1851. Upon taking power for a second time, with the strong backing of the Indians from Western Guatemala, Carrera put down the Lucíos revolt, even though that

> revolt was in his home territory and led by his (mestizo) followers who were disappointed in the rewards they received for supporting Carrera earlier.[92]

Carrera's Maya support, his defense of the Catholic Church and its land holdings, and his unwillingness to radically transform the agricultural landscape, did not sit well with important sectors of the Spanish elite intent on developing an agro-export industry, or with betrayed Mestizo sectors.

This impetus among certain elite sectors, to develop and alter the Guatemalan countryside, is not surprising since the nation was economically stagnant relative to other nations. At the time of independence the one major export crop, indigo (a fabric dye produced in southeastern Guatemala) was dropping in external demand as artificial dyes had replaced this once lucrative dyestuff. The shift in an export commodity was being made to another dyestuff, cochineal, but in effect left the southeast in decline as cochineal production was taken up by small producers in a limited area around the capital (Antigua and Amatitlan areas). Though initially lucrative for a relatively few producers, the cochineal crop was to be devastated by weather conditions in the 1850s, and as well was being replaced by synthetic dyes. As a consequence, Guatemala as a whole entered its era of independence with a declining and futureless agro-export sector, bereft of any urban industrial activity. Although the Carrera regime has been praised in some intellectual circles for its "defense" and protection of a "folk" or indigenous culture and economy, this is not necessarily an accurate assessment. Between the Gálvez period and the initial decade of the Carrera government, the assumed protection of a "folk - indigenous" tradition would seem to be more a result of economic necessity rather than a determined defense of a specifically Guatemalan "way of life" over a Western - European ideal. The reasons for this are expressed in the fact that Guatemala's economic "modernization" lacked, in this time period, any discernible sources of capital investment or even a specific resource area in which to invest. The Spanish landowning class was extremely unproductive and was generally uninterested in risking their lands and wealth in speculative ventures, preferring instead to live from the rents and produce of tenant farmers. Thus, with a state with a minimum revenue base, a landowning elite with no entrepreneurial spirit, and a legal regime that left the status of land and property in question (private property not being a protected right), the "Liberal" sectors of the elite faced numerous constraints in their efforts to "modernize" Guatemalan society along Western - European standards. It is for this reason that the production of coffee for export became an opportunity for the economic transformation of the national territory, and one which even the "conservative" Carrera regime could not overlook.

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[92] Carol Smith (1990), p. 94.

What fostered elite interest in coffee production was the high prices this commodity commanded in European markets and the initial returns garnered by Guatemala's neighbors, particularly Costa Rica, through earlier developments of the coffee industry. Coffee, though, given the nature of the plant itself, does not allow for a quick return with an initial planting. It takes several years for the seedlings to mature to a point at which the trees produce beans at a quantity available to be picked and processed for export, thus favoring those producers with either an alternative source of income over the maturation period (single crop, large scale) or the production of coffee in combination with other agricultural goods (multi- crop, small scale). The second major factor is that coffee plants do not thrive in all terrains and altitudes throughout the Central American isthmus or within Guatemala. Thus the lower altitudes and large valley areas of the Maya highlands were found to be extremely conducive to coffee production due to the richness of the soil and the suitable altitude and climatic conditions. Consequently, the Maya were well placed to take advantage of the expansion of this lucrative crop throughout Guatemala given the fact that they were in possession of the best lands, held them as communal possessions, and were already involved in numerous agricultural activities. In addition, they lived under a political regime that addressed or at least paternally protected their interests, and extended them the first opportunities in the production of coffee.

> First attempts by the Liberal Government under Mariano Gálvez and the Conservative Government of Rafael Carrera to democratize the commercial production of coffee, by handing over idle land to landless men and the promotion of the crop in the native communities, were well received by these small - scale producers. In response to the promotion of coffee growing, many communities devoted themselves to planting coffee and establishing medium - sized plantations, conscious of the fact that in this way they would become more solvent economically and increase their chances of not falling prey to the forced labour imposed by the landowners.[93]

J. C. Cambranes observes that in several departments (Escuintla, Suchitepéquez, Alta Verapaz) the department bosses were astounded with the degree of community enthusiasm and early success at developing this export. Certainly this dispels any truth to the claims that the "Indians" were by nature "lazy, unintelligent, and unproductive" or that they were not adaptive to new types of commercial agricultural production. It also dispenses with the notion that there is something inherent in the production of coffee itself that necessarily entails the most brutal and exploitive forms of labor relations. Rather, all of these perceptions lie strictly within the thinking and political - economic practices of the Liberal elite who were to take power toward the end of the 19th century. The thought that "Indians" and "Mestizos" would be the main beneficiaries of this lucrative export trade was more than the existing Spanish elite could bear, particularly the financiers, exporters, and those large landowners located in the stagnating southeast and south - central regions. It may also be observed that it was not the "elite" who vigorously introduced and took up the production of coffee for export.

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[93] J. C. Cambranes, p. 63.

The first coffee exports were made in 1852 and by the late 1850s the pressure was on the Carrera regime from powerful economic sectors, European and domestic, to develop coffee production throughout the highlands. The initial project for these groups was the simple acquisition of the suitable lands, which took place by claiming the right to use the Maya communal landholdings. These were vast and immense tracts of land that had either been minimally used by the Maya or had been left uncleared. Initially then, these communal lands were leased to this nascent coffee class at low rates of rent, or were granted outright through connections to highly placed public officials. This process did not satisfy the most important demand of this evolving coffee elite.

> A key and characteristic contradiction in the agrarian redistribution plan promoted by the Conservatives, was that land leased to life tenants by the communities did not become the private property of the parties who took possession of it. They did, however, retain the right to bequeath the land to their offspring, sublet it, even sell their acquired right to use and enjoy the fruits of it, but the land continued to be the legal property of the municipalities which had leased them in return for negligible annual tax. In this way, a large percentage of *finqueros*, some of whom came to be prominent coffee growers, were simple tenant farmers on communal property during the Conservative period.[94]

Due to the high returns that were possible, the Carrera regime gradually lost control over this rapacious dynamic.

> Guatemalan agriculture was evolving independently of the whims and desires of most Conservatives and die - hard traditionalists. The feuds between the large peasant communities with their vast stretches of fallow land, and those who advocated development in the form of agricultural export production, went beyond the control of Conservative authorities and the possibility of any solution.[95]

In addition to the domestic elite there was also a growing interest by European entrepreneurs (French, British, German) backed by European merchant capital in promoting production in Guatemala. Unheard - of levels of foreign capital began to flow into Guatemala to finance the expansion of the coffee industry into a single - crop, large scale format. In effect, where the previous administrative weakness of the Carrera regime had allowed the Maya to flourish during a period of economic malaise, this weakness during the escalation of rampant commodity speculation served to leave the Maya communities vulnerable to the most pernicious forms of land invasion and disregard for Maya property claims.

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[94] Ibid., p. 85.
[95] Ibid., p. 90.

It was in the later stages of the Carrera regime that the real contradictions and limited power base of the "Conservative" regime became evident. As the demands for more land, better roads and transportation facilities and a secure labor force from the growing domestic and foreign coffee elite rapidly increased, the Carrera regime became more repressive and authoritarian in its behavior towards the Maya. The resistance on the part of the Maya to this elite - regime pressure took many forms, but did not lead to a large mass movement throughout the highlands in opposition to the expansion of the coffee industry. There are several factors that contributed to there not taking place a widespread movement. One factor was related to the land tenure structure in the highlands, due to the manner in which the Maya communities were left with community control over lands during the independence period. Here there were considerable inequalities in land tenure among the communities that resulted in protracted legal and physical battles between Maya communities over the control of specific parcels of land during the Carrera administration.[96] A second factor was the way in which coffee production expanded, with a particular view to specific geographical regions, i.e. the valleys of Alta Verapaz and the lower altitudes of the highlands, rather than an all - out assault on "Indian" lands per se. Consequently, only certain Maya communities within these regions were threatened and their lands expropriated for the primary expansion of coffee production by the foreign / domestic elite while a large number of communities remained unaffected due to the terrain or the inability to transform the terrain into coffee producing plantations. A third factor was that those communities directly affected by coffee production during the Carrera regime did not lose their ownership of these lands, and were only compelled to rent underutilized or unutilized lands without a loss of legal ownership. A fourth factor was the faith the Maya held in the Carrera administration (through the Catholic Church) to the degree that the Maya communities felt they had an accessible and sympathetic figure to whom they could appeal for redress. This is important to the extent that Carrera became a figure personally involved in settling disputes and conflicts. Thus, a high degree of arbitrariness was present in the process of conflict resolution, a condition that was not conducive to large scale, long - term, speculative commodity production in which the security and control over land possession was paramount. Overall we find several factors that diminished the possibilities for broad - based and organized Maya resistance and created conditions under which Maya resistance was to be largely localized to those specific areas and periods of time when the Maya communities were directly affected by the impact of coffee production.

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[96] See David McCreery, "State Power, Indigenous Communities, and Land Tenure in Nineteenth - Century Guatemala, 1820 - 1920." in Carol Smith, ed., (1990) p. 96 - 115.

Although these conditions minimized the number of Maya involved in resisting, it did foster a strong impression among the expanding coffee elite that the "Indians" were opposed to "national progress." It is clear that once the initial small - scale / communal development of coffee production was discarded for the large - scale / single crop production favored by the Liberal - foreign elite, the Maya affected took measures to confront this expropriation of their lands and authority. Seed beds were destroyed, legal actions were initiated, community appeals to Carrera and other high officials were made, and most importantly, the Maya refused to perform the wage labor which coffee production (in this form) demanded.

> Not only did the peasant refuse to work for *ladino* landowners, but when this work had to be done far from their communities, they were even more reluctant. The objection and resistance on the part of the Indians with regard to rendering personal service could be attributed to the fact that they did not want to abandon their own crops in order to care for those of strangers, particularly because, after years of exploitation, they knew that they would be abused and subjected to paltry wages from those who solicited their services. This attitude only served to reinforce the racist vision (emanating from the ruling class) of the Indian as lazy, naturally opposed to the idea of work and only capable of being incorporated into commercial agriculture by means of forced labour. This prejudice which dates back to the period of Spanish colonial domination was used once more by the *finqueros* in order to control the labour force composed of community members, particularly after 1871, when the greater part of their lands which was suited to coffee growing was wrested from them.[97]

The labor aspect of this equation is particularly significant, for it served to redefine the existing socio - economic status of the specific ethnic groups as the increasing necessity of labor began to override the desire to procure lands for coffee production. It is here that we move from the concrete (land appropriation) to the more abstract (labor demands) in order to understand how the Maya went from generally successful small-scale agriculturalists and artisans to the most exploited seasonal labor force in the Americas. What occurred, as J. C. Cambranes has noted, was that a racially based justification was *reinstituted* to compel and force the Maya to work on the coffee plantations in the supposedly larger interest of the "progress of the nation." It is important to observe that the Liberal elite and its foreign allies could never have proceeded with such an immense project against the Maya without a considerably larger base of internal support,

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[97] J. C. Cambranes, p. 106.

support that was found within the Spanish speaking Mestizo population. I do not want to suggest that the Mestizos played a purely functional or instrumental role, in which it could be said that the one group (Spanish elite) simply took on the Mestizos as allies against the Maya. Rather, there was a complex evolution of events and circumstances, most likely initiated by Carrera's shift in support from the southeast to the west, betraying the Mestizo interests of the southeast in favor of the Maya of the western highlands. Another corroborating factor was that the stagnation in the southeast led to a certain level of migration from the southeast to west, as Mestizos attempted to take advantage of the expanding coffee production in the west as producers themselves. At this point they were rebuffed by the affected Maya communities in the same way as the Spanish - foreign elite, but unlike the latter, the Mestizos lacked the resources and contacts to be influential in their efforts at acquiring lands. In the emerging racist ideology propounded by the aggressive coffee elite, the advantages of being a Spanish speaker (though of mixed blood) could not have been lost on this Mestizo population. As the Liberal forces coalesced around the ideals of wealth and "progress" offered by coffee production, and the Carrera regime futilely attempted to mitigate the extremes of this production process, the Mestizos became strong supporters of the Liberal agenda. The Liberal project offered not only a new legal regime (turning renters of communal lands into land owners) that would favor the Mestizos, but also a massive economic project that extended real and tangible advantages to larger sectors of the Mestizo population. It is within this increasingly racist atmosphere that a fluency in Spanish (which was to become the defining characteristic of being "Ladino") became pivotal to understanding and identifying with the forces in play and the material advantages that were to accrue from instituting the Liberal project *at the expense of the Maya*, supplying several reasons for which to support the Liberal movement against the Carrera - Conservative regime. At this point in history the total denigration of the Maya culture is not apparent. The racist ideology being propagated was only focused on the "Indian attitude" as an obstacle to "national progress" and was against the Carrera regime and the Catholic Church for extending "special rights" to the Maya while obstructing the expansion of coffee production.

The limited strength of Carrera's paternalistic conservatism was revealed by the fact that the Maya had been neither politicized nor organized to defend the policies of the Carrera regime. After Carrera died in 1865, a weak Conservative coalition held on to power for six more years until it was overthrown by a renewed, vastly expanded, but ideologically altered Liberal coalition in 1871, led by Justo Rufino Barrios. This Liberal coalition held no preference for small - scale production, and was supported by numerous Mestizos who felt betrayed by Carrera and sought opportunity in the dynamic expansion of coffee production in the highlands. The failings on the part of the Carrera - Conservative regime were most apparent when Liberal forces were able to draw support from some discontented Maya communities (through speciously claiming a concern for Maya interests) even though the Liberals were fully committed to destroying community control over property in the highlands.[98]

Liberal Ideology, Capitalist Expansion, and Ethnic Discrimination

The inauguration of the "Liberal" political and economic project, beginning in 1871, had absolutely no relation to the ideals of "equality before the law, " political representation, voters' rights, free expression or individual rights. The sole content of the Liberal project was to eradicate the colonial - conservative land tenure system and replace it with a purely economic conception of private property, conducive to long-term investment for agro-export production. This is not surprising since the leading figure at the national level from 1871 onward was General Justo Rufino Barrios, a coffee grower from the department of San Marcos. The "liberal" designation, then, is a misnomer in understanding the legal - ideological transformation that occurred in the last decades of the 19th century. It is from this essentially non-liberal understanding of the "Liberals" that I will present an ethnic examination on what was in effect the "revolution" of 1871. The importance of analyzing this Liberal project as more than a past historical event is the extent to which Justo Rufino Barrios is still symbolically a revered national figure in contemporary Ladino ideology, whereas the Carrera regime is mostly forgotten. The reasons for this lie in the Liberal economic project, which radically altered how ethnic - cultural characteristics were to be aligned with economic and political positions in Guatemalan society.

Throughout the 19th century, prior to Barrios, Guatemala was characterized by a vast and widely displaced rural culture in comparison to the small, urban - based, Spanish elite. This rural culture was neither homogenous nor uniform, but an expression of the varied regional - economic specializations, Maya and Mestizo linguistic groups, and local political - religious traditions. Due to the magnitude of the national territory and the low degree of mobility, cultural differences, except in relation to the Spanish elite, held no special significance other than as "cultural differences." The sizable rural majority shared a common economic condition (if not somewhat better for some Maya communities) and no significant economic advantages were associated with being either Mestizo or Maya. Towards the end of the Carrera regime, as noted in the previous section, the Mestizo - Spanish antagonism began to break down, establishing for the first time a "Spanish - speaking unity." This was the origin of the ethnic group later referred to as the "Ladinos." The Barrios regime represented, then, the first unity of these ethnic forces in power, mainly to the advantage of the Spanish - foreign elite, but appreciably for sectors of the Mestizo population. Due to the coalescence of these ethnic forces behind an agenda for the secure installation and expansion of the coffee industry, there was a significant broadening of the "elite" category generally as the numbers of coffee producers, labor contractors, and government officials increased in placement throughout the Maya highlands. It is from this expansion in privileged positions within Guatemalan society that the whole conception of "national progress" was to become dated to the installation of Barrios's "Liberal" regime. Predictably, what had constituted the history of the Mestizos, namely the experience of discrimination and servitude, became replaced over time through the appropriation and identification with the urban grandeur and colonial history of the Spanish (Creole - Peninsular) elite. For most contemporary Ladinos, then, their historical understanding of themselves is largely a fiction, and in fact explains why Barrios is considered a "national hero." The Mestizos generally did not have any reason to identify with the "nation" of Guatemala any more than the Maya until the Barrios regime created the conditions under which a much larger percentage of Spanish speakers, simply as Spanish speakers, found in the new regime numerous opportunities related to the large scale, single - crop development of the coffee industry. These opportunities (for economic security and prosperity) arising out of the coffee industry cannot be understated. The wealth generated by this commodity at the time was immense, and the secondary economic activities (crop and land management, transportation, processing, private and public administration, commerce, shipping, urban and rural construction) were just as sizable, rapidly transforming both the urban and rural economic environments of Guatemala. It was within this atmosphere of wholesale "national change" initiated under Carrera that the economic interests of the Mestizo population coincided with the animosity of the Spanish - foreign elite towards the Maya. Although there was to remain for some time a clear distinction between the Mestizo and Spanish groups based on social status, an important racial barrier had been broken that was to have dire implications for large numbers of Maya communities.

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[98] Carol Smith has labelled the Carrera regime as "populist," but this is a mistaken categorization. If the term is to have any meaning it refers to a particular coalition of "politicized" urban forces within an advanced stage of industrialization e.g. Brazil under Goulart, Argentina under Perón. The Carrera regime was paternalistic, and definitely not populist.

Within this syncretism of Mestizo and Spanish interests there was also an important spatial and regional dimension to the eventual success of what was to become assumed as a "natural" or eternal separation between Ladinos and Maya. These regional - ethnic dimensions were to permeate the economic and political structures of Guatemalan society, and were to be most apparent in the structure of the labor market. What the separation was based on was the movement of Mestizos from the southeast and from around the capital into the Maya highlands. Hence, it was not a situation in which an interspersed Mestizo - Maya population became racially charged, and the Mestizos turned on their immediate Maya neighbors with the support of the state. Such a prior condition might have mitigated the ethnic extremes that were to be established under the Barrios regime. Instead, the regional separation served to reinforce and strengthen the Liberal agenda of Barrios as Mestizos moved into or became more securely entrenched within the Maya highlands in numerous positions of power and influence (connections and ability to appeal to the capital), all reinforced by the Liberal administration. As of 1873, when Barrios officially took power, the main restriction on the expansion of the coffee industry was the availability of labor, and not just land, as the coffee trees matured and the export facilities increased. By 1871, substantial amounts of land had already been established as single renter / single owner plantations along the lower and upper highlands of the Pacific Coast, around the capital, and in the northern Verapazes. It was already common knowledge among those Maya communities most affected by coffee production that the coffee industry was not going to benefit them in the least. This only became most evident under the Barrios regime.

> It was common for private parties settled on communal property not to pay the annual tax which they promised to pay upon taking possession of it. Pretexts for not making these payments were infinite: either it was a bad harvest or animals or locusts had destroyed the seed beds. The truth is that the lessees considered themselves the owners of the property belonging to the municipalities and were confident that sooner of later the Government would recognize them as the rightful owners. This is exactly what occurred when the "*Liberals*" came to power.[99]

Under the Liberal regime the unused lands, formerly controlled by the municipalities and communities, were gradually auctioned off by Liberal governments in areas of prime coffee growth, or the Spanish - Mestizo renters were simply allowed to use past rental payments as capital towards outright ownership of those lands they were already producing on. All of the money from auctions and owners (formerly renters) went directly into the government's coffers and not to the respective municipal authorities.[100] In addition, land invasions were promoted to increase the assault on what were deemed the "unproductive" lands of the communities. Once rental status was forced on the community, it was only a short time before the new Spanish - speaking owner was granted the right of ownership. However, it is apparent that the Liberal regime moved in gradations on the land issue, unwilling to outlaw communal - municipal landownership outright and without attempting to force the Maya *en masse* from their lands. In part this reflected the many limitations imposed on expanding the existing levels of coffee production in the highlands, the lack of infrastructure for processing and transportation, the scarcity of secure sources of seasonal labor, and concerns about Maya resistance. Still, the long - held antipathy of the Spanish elite towards the Maya was to be expressed through a most brutal attack on the Maya communities in many centuries.

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[99] J. C. Cambranes, p. 93.

[100] See David McCreery in Carol Smith, ed., (1990) p. 105 - 106.

The initial coffee project of the Carrera regime had favored the interests of the small producers and some Maya communities. This had fostered an equitable exchange in labor time and community support (money, materials) behind efforts to put in place the necessary infrastructure, e.g. roads, railway lines, land clearing. Towards the end of the Carrera regime this vision had all but vanished, replaced by large capital backing Spanish, Mestizo and foreign interests, which by definition totally excluded the Maya communities. Spanish and foreign interests had always viewed the Maya as only a source of labor occupying "unproductive lands." As the Carrera regime began to heed the demands of these larger monied interests, greater pressure was placed on the Maya communities forcing them to organize *cuadrillos* or labor gangs to build the necessary infrastructure and supply labor to those large coffee producers who required it. It was during this phase, as Maya resistance became more apparent, that the Mestizos entered into the broader coffee enterprise as supervisors, overseers, securers of labor, administrators, and most importantly as rural militias used to track down those Maya individuals who fled from state - enforced "obligations." The necessity for an expanded administrative and repressive apparatus to secure and regulate Maya labor certainly predates the Liberal regime of 1871 by well over a decade. Under the Carrera regime, a vicious program of forced Maya labor had already been entrenched:

> The Conservative and Liberal dictatorships gave the opposition against forced labour among the peasants such importance that prisons were built in the regions where road projects were in action. By means of repression and punishment, the State hoped to conquer the peasantry's resistance to work that in many cases meant death. The opposition became stronger as road projects were carried out in regions where humidity and excessive heat predominated, working conditions were abominable and the work itself exhausting.[101]

This is an important point to cite as it demonstrates that the Carrera regime had no intrinsic loyalty to the Maya or the particular "rural culture," and thus the regime's initial support for small scale agriculture reflected more an economic priority rather than any deeply held "conservative" position on development. As the Conservative regime lost control over the expansion of the coffee industry in the highlands, the rural militias formed by the largest coffee growers openly terrorized those Maya communities that were resisting labor recruitment. These communities no longer had recourse to the Carrera regime, due to the overwhelming official support for large scale, single - crop, single - owner coffee production. Consequently, by the end of the Carrera - Conservative era, coffee production had already been firmly ingrained as the "national interest," and the Maya communities generally defined as a vast source of land and labor. The transition then from a Conservative to a Liberal regime represented a change in the legal - ideological status of property and the Maya peoples, or more precisely, a "political" recognition of the economic practices and ethnic discrimination that had been taking place for some time. This would also explain why some Maya communities supported the overthrow of the last Conservative regime in 1870 in alliance with General Barrios, perhaps in the hope that the Liberals might minimize the extremes of the economic transformation underway. Since the Liberals more fully endorsed the racist rationale of the Spanish and foreign capital interests, this was not a possibility. Instead, sectors of the Mestizo population were afforded broader advantages in this respect even though they entered the coffee production process in a subordinate role to the Spanish - foreign interests, as either important functionaries in an expanding state structure or as small and medium size coffee producers indebted to larger interests.

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[101] J. C. Cambranes, p. 211.

> In the economic field this domination drove the big agricultural exporters, who each time concentrated and at the same time centralized the best productive land and capital, to successfully claim the rationalization of the exploitation of the rural workers. They also exacted an extraordinary tax and great profit from the small and medium *finqueros*, whose harvests they used to finance through the mortgage credits system. These small and medium proprietors who saw their profit reduced in the circulation sphere, i.e. in their commercial transactions with impresarios who practiced usury, tried to recover from their reduced income through the over-exploitation of their temporal and permanent workers, reducing their minimum salary as much as possible, while extending the working hours and the work to be done.[102]

This form of labor exploitation ensured that even when coffee prices were low, profits could be secured at all levels of this new Ladino hierarchy. In addition, the government structure itself was rife with corruption and abuse which made it possible for the lowest administrators in this apparatus to accumulate wealth and lands. This is how the Ladinos were to relate to the Maya in the highlands, as an ethnic group backed with significant monetary and "official" government power. The new Mestizo - Spanish - foreign coalition represented by the Liberal regime had a clear vision of the Maya as but a "slave - labor" reserve. The economic justification for this had already been firmly established under the Carrera regime. The Liberal regime simply legalized all the dimensions of this racially based economic vision and backed it with overwhelming force.

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[102] Ibid., p. 320 - 321.

After 1871 the attack by the newly unified "coffee state" on the Maya reflected the most brutal treatment the Maya had endured since the initial Spanish conquest over 300 years earlier. From the 1850s onward, the process of capitalist expansion was relentless well into the 20th century. Over this period, the Maya were to lose millions of acres of formerly communal and family owned lands. In addition, within less than a 15 year period (1860 - 1875) numerous Maya communities went from relatively successful small scale agriculturalists and artisans to a starving multitude, forced around at will by the new coffee elite and government officials. The highlands were to become notorious for the land robbery and arbitrary justice meted out by this elite.

> Starting in 1871, the custom of requesting "*supplemental title deeds*" in order to legalize the theft of lands through another form "*composition*" i.e. through the payment, often symbolic, of the value of the lands that had been usurped from the peasants. The protection that the authorities gave the expansionist owners was so ample, that when the peasants who were to be despoiled tried to get on with their traditional farming, the landlord resorted to the use of physical violence against them, without any fear of being punished.[103]

In marked contrast, the capital city itself took on a more "modern" European appearance as opera houses and parks were constructed with the coffee profits and foreign investment. General J. Rufino Barrios clearly outlined the ideology of the new capitalist project by stating that "100 foreign families were worth as much as 20,000 indians."[104] By 1877, the existing forced labor system was fully institutionalized into law. J. C. Cambranes offers a few insights into the degrading depths to which the Maya population were submitted. In terms of wages, the Maya were paid on average 1 1/2 to 2 reales a day, the highest wage recorded being 4 reales per day, for either laboring on the coffee plantations or on government projects.

> It is evident that this attitude (refusal to do forced work) shared by the great majority of peasants and the chronic lack of workers which resulted was caused by the farmers themselves as they mistreated and humiliated the workers, submitting them to their own interests. However, this did not encourage the owners to increase wages or stop their arrogant behavior and absolute disdain for the man who fed and enriched them with his work. The only thing they had in mind was the gain of profits no matter how, through the practice of forced work teams and the hidden enslavement of the worker, who was not spared violence, terror, prison or hard labour in public works, which in many cases meant being sentenced to death. Among the Cuban slaves of that period, a "*black rural labourer*" did not earn less than 30 pesos monthly (which were equivalent to 240 reales in Guatemala) for his work on sugar plantations.[105]

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[103] Ibid., p. 304.

[104] Ibid., p. 302.

[105] Ibid., p. 176 - 177.

Numerous men, women and children perished on work details since labor quotas did not discriminate by sex or age. The preferred method of transporting the 100 lb. sacks of coffee beans over great distances was on the backs of Maya labor, burrows and oxcarts only being introduced when a scarcity of labor for picking coffee and other tasks occurred.

> Peasant poverty, on the one hand, and the landowners' unwillingness to incur additional expenses on the other, due to the abundance of cheap labour and Indian labourers with strong backs, dampened any hopes of innovating a system for transporting coffee, particularly on the plantations, and from the plantations to the marketplaces. When German *finqueros* from Alta Verapaz found themselves obliged to give up using peasants as a means of transportation because the greater part of the labour market was cornered by the most powerful foreign landowners, they improved routes in the department in order to speed up the delivery of coffee abroad.[106]

The clearing of rocks and trees, and the building of roads and railway lines, were all carried out by the legally sanctioned, forced Maya labor system. This was a tradition which persisted into the 1940s. Due to the augmented administrative and repressive powers of the Liberal regime, the Maya had few options and no political allies. "The only way of escaping from the forced labour was to flee the country (to Mexico, Belize, Honduras or El Salvador), hide in the mountains or in gullies and ravines; or to choose an almost illegal existence as a fugitive from justice."[107] Such an option was generally only open to those Maya communities located in the more remote departments. Along the lower highlands where plantations and government authorities were more pervasive, the communities were generally dismantled, becoming nothing more than areas of rampant starvation, misery, and oppression. As observed previously, there were several reasons why the Maya did not unite against this process, but as Cambranes documents, there was nothing pacific about the economic transformation in progress.

> Land expropriation was not passively accepted by the communities. Already before the decree on the redemption of land granted for rental, the small and medium ladino growers who had succeeded in gaining access to the lands of the native communities, complained about the evident hostility of the village people who, in many cases, prevented them from cultivating the land shares they had rented.[108]

It is from this period that we may date the present and pervasive Ladino "fear" about a possible "Indian uprising" arising out of the countryside. Many appeals by Ladinos to the authorities were officially recorded, requesting local protection from hostile communities unwilling to permit Ladino expansion onto their "unproductive" lands.

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[106] Ibid., p. 206.

[107] Ibid., p. 225.

[108] Ibid., p. 268.

> The rejection of the natives towards the expropriation was shown, in some cases, by mysterious fires that burnt down coffee trees, coffee utilities and even the temporary worker's houses. On other occasions, groups of villagers appeared in the fields, threatening the owners and the entrusted staff of the plantations with "machetes" (cane knives) and sticks.
>
> There are plenty of reports from departamental authorities where the "*lack of public spirit*" of the peasantry is mentioned; the "*reasonably great difficulty to fight against the stubborn resistance of the Indians*"; the "*rebellious character*" of the natives, "*that has imprinted their bad social position*"; as well as, and this is the most frequent, "*great problems*" among the peasants due to the expropriations.[109]

What is also apparent is the extent to which the Mestizos quickly adopted the modernizing and "progressive" mythology propagated by the Spanish - foreign elite to justify the land expropriation and the forced labor system. By the late 1800s, as foreigners and their capital increased in proportion, and government repression became more thorough, it was not uncommon for the government to grant land with Maya communities and laborers included. The works of J. C. Cambranes and others now provide us with a fairly detailed understanding of how ethnic relations were reconstructed in the latter half of the 19th century.[110] The Maya were rapidly transformed into a specific ethnically defined class, most accurately classified as "slave labor" and "expendable agriculturalists." Wages were but tokens or symbolic gestures given the extreme levels of starvation in certain areas and the excessive levels of force utilized in the name of "national progress."

The surprising feature of this process is that labor shortages were endemic throughout the coffee industry in the later decades of the 19th century and well into the 20th century, suggesting that there should have been significant pressure to attract labor through higher wages and better working conditions. The reasons why this did not occur reflects the structure of production put in place by the coffee plantation owners. Year round care for the coffee groves (clearing, trimming) were managed by a relatively small number of workers who resided on the plantations, exchanging labor for the use of a plot of land for subsistence. Named *colono* labor, this group consisted of unfortunate Mestizos, and those Maya from destroyed communities. As a result, there was only a two to three month period in which labor was in short supply for the picking, processing, and transporting of the coffee. The largest coffee interests (generally foreign - owned) did not have a problem securing the necessary labor in this period. With their private militias and direct ties to the national administration, the success of their coffee plantations was considered as a "national interest" in which any labor shortages involved a government labor round - up.

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[109] Ibid., p. 270 - 271.

[110] See Carol Smith, "Origins of the National Question in Guatemala," David McCreery, "State Power, Indigenous Communities, and Land in Nineteenth - Century Guatemala, 1820 - 1920," and Robert Carmack, "State and Community in Nineteenth - Century Guatemala: The Momostenango Case," in Carol Smith, ed., (1994).

The problem of securing labor was felt by the numerous medium and small - sized Ladino producers who had less political clout and fewer resources. What was spawned was an elaborate and pervasive system based on debt bondage that was spread throughout the highlands. This system benefited far more Ladinos than just the coffee producers as the system became institutionalized. Ladino labor contractors and coffee producers colluded to ensure the next seasons labor force by making sure that seasonal laborers (whole Maya families) became indebted to the respective contractor or coffee producer; debts were transferable from one Maya generation to the next. Through a combination of bad harvests for the Maya communities in the highlands, the sale of alcohol, food and goods on credit, and the advancing of cash amounts by Ladino entrepreneurs, more and more communities became drawn into a vast system of perpetual indebtedness. The fulfillment of these debts through labor time or other means was ruthlessly enforced by the legal system and private militias. Although it has been suggested that this manner of procuring labor was extremely inefficient and supposedly open to abuse by the Maya (taking cash advances from several different sources), these criticisms deflect us from the truly destructive consequences of this system for the Maya generally and not just for those in the coffee producing regions, and the significant advantages for broad sectors of the Ladino population. For the Maya, abuse of the cash advance system was only a short term gain, and a minimal benefit that was soon lost through legal action or repression. In contrast, Ladino coffee growers, labor contractors, and merchants received permanent gains, requiring only a small capital investment. "In fact, during the period of capitalist development in Guatemala, debt slavery was the form of forced labour best suited for preserving the existing economic, political, and social structure, and the one which best guaranteed the ruling class overnight wealth."[111]

Through accumulating debts on the part of 1000s of Maya communities Ladinos were able to acquire control over the best Maya lands in many communities throughout the highlands, forcing the Maya onto more marginal lands or into a precarious existence as land renters.[112] It is in this fashion that the Ladinos became established in a variety of lucrative enterprises as vast expanses of productive land were transferred through the debt system from Maya to Ladino. The Ladinos who acquired these extensions were then able to turn around and rent them back to the Maya, to produce other agricultural commodities for sale, or if the climate permitted, to initiate coffee production. This system appears to have been more pervasive than the process of direct expropriation. It was also far more subtle and pernicious, as it led to the slow but continual dismantling of Maya community and family control over parcels of land in unequal amounts and over staggered periods of time. In addition, it left the impression that the specific Maya families affected were responsible for their losses, rather than the community, the government, or the Ladino landowners and contractors who benefited. It is this dynamic that explains why wages were never adjusted in relation to the availability of labor. Debt bondage, backed by force, afforded more labor security to coffee growers from one season to the next, but also an important dynamic for perpetual land and financial accumulation. Increased wages and real competition over labor never would have fostered the conditions for this type of accumulation. This system may not have been "efficient" but it was certainly profitable for the numerous Ladinos (public and private) involved in the debt bondage system. It clearly expressed the disproportionate power relations between Maya and Ladinos in the highlands. What the debt bondage system served to establish was an extensive Ladino network, intimately connecting coffee producers, contractors, and merchants in all the municipal centers and larger Maya communities. In addition, a Ladino - staffed administrative and legal apparatus expanded in relation to the increasing Ladino property ownership in the highlands.

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[111] Ibid., p. 228.

[112] The introduction of the coffee industry was an uneven process affecting different regions at different times, and as D. McCreery observes, coffee planters did not need most community lands "and only slowly and indirectly permeated them as a by - product of labor recruiting." D. McCreery in C. Smith (1994), p. 113.

An important alteration that was to be made to the political landscape of Guatemala under Barrios was the creation of the Escuela Politécnica (1873), an all - Ladino officer training school. This marked the centralization of military and political authority in the capital city. Although it has been suggested that this early professionalization and augmentation of the officer class of the military is related to the agrarian transformation and Maya resistance, there is little evidence to support such an assessment. By 1871 private militias, political - administrative bosses at the local level, and the rural police force (all beholden to the interests of the coffee planters) were a permanent presence in the rural territory. These bodies, and not the military, carried out the repression and terror that was necessary to secure labor and put in place the infrastructure. The attack on the Maya and the control of their communities was maintained through several other official and unofficial organizations. What the unification and training of the officer corp achieved was the stabilization of the national political sphere where by the capital became the center for determining political change. This effectively wrested power from, or prevented the accumulation of rural forces by, "renegade" officers or large landowners which had been the basis of earlier political changes at the national level e.g. Carrera, Barrios. Even though military officers were to play important political roles as presidents - dictators, they did this more in the role of large landowners themselves than as representatives of the military institution. The military was not to play a major role as an autonomous institution until after 1944 with the fall of the last personalistic dictatorship of Ubico.[113] With the ethnic unification of the Mestizos and the Spanish, the expansion of an administrative - repressive structure for the coffee industry, and the creation of a military force in the capital, all the features were in place for the combining of a rural - urban division with the Maya - Ladino separation. For over 100 years the Maya were to play no direct role in "national" politics of the new Ladino nation. The Maya would enter the 20th century as basically an ethnic group with no legal rights or status.

By the end of the 19th century, the basic structures of Guatemala's coffee industry were in place. These structures persisted unmolested well into the 1940s and beyond. As has been documented, the expansion of this industry went through several phases which reflected the changing economic and political coalitions which came into play over this period. Initially the Conservative regime promoted coffee on a combination of small scale, mixed agriculture on communal or private property, without regard to ethnic differences. As the levels of wealth generated from this industry became apparent, the Conservative regime aligned itself more closely with those economic forces (domestic and foreign) that sought the wholesale transformation of the rural highlands into single crop, coffee plantations. Such a project coincided with a gradual alteration of the existing Mestizo - Spanish relations, and a redefinition of the Maya and Maya lands in Guatemalan society. The politics of the day, increasingly under the influence of European capital, not only permitted (due to a weak administration) but actively supported the encroachment onto Maya communal lands, the introduction of the debt bondage system, and the terrorizing and destruction of numerous Maya communities.

Into the 1860s the ethnic character of Guatemala's capitalist development was firmly established, leaving the Liberal coalition to legalize the various dimensions of the ongoing attack on the Maya communities. The ideological - legal legitimation of this process put in place a powerful institutional structure for this attack under the banner of "national progress" to be directed by the first "Spanish speaking unity." It has also been demonstrated why the Mestizo ethnic group so readily adopted the ideology of the Spanish - foreign elite against the Maya of the highlands. The level of capital for coffee expansion, and the opportunities to acquire land, wealth and lucrative employment, served to legitimate a supposed Mestizo superiority over the Maya. In this, a certain revenge factor against the previous Church - State "protection" or "special privileges" afforded the Maya should not be overlooked. As Mestizos became established in various occupations (labor contractors, coffee producers, merchants, plantation managers, rural militias) and professions (administrators, appointed officials, courts, police, teachers) manual labor became defined as strictly "Indian work" unfit for the rising Ladino ethnic group.[114] As observed, Mestizo support was crucial to the short and long - term commercial success of the coffee industry as leading figures in the numerous Maya communities were not willing participants in the dismantling of their communities. In addition, the encroachment on the Maya lands as renters and then owners by the monied coffee interests, and the forced enslavement of the Maya through repression and debt, were gradual processes that affected the Maya highlands to an unequal degree. This served to nullify an organized response on the part of the Maya, a response that was unlikely in the first place given the dispersed nature of the Maya communities and the existent linguistic and geographical barriers. Recourse on the part of the Maya lay in community (hence "localized") appeals directly to Carrera, which were an extremely arbitrary and eventually futile method of redress. By and large, the private and public forms of repression were in place when localized forms of resistance became the only means of blocking the manner in which coffee production was being introduced into the highlands.

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[113] This is not a common perception, as most observers assume the military had an important role in constructing and maintaining the numerous economic and political dimensions of the coffee industry. There is no evidence to support this since the Maya did not rebel, and the military itself was not based in the rural countryside. Most of the mythology surrounding the military with a "proud" history for over 100 years (since 1871) has been propagated by the military itself.

The hallmarks of the last decades of the 19th century were then, the overt and subtle destruction of Maya economic security and communal authority. The coffee industry, in the form that it was expanding, effectively destroyed any possibility for ethnic integration and ethnic unity, rather than establishing the bases for "national integration." This clearly was not a "colonial vestige" being strengthened by capitalism, but a whole new set of economic relations being created by capital expansion in which ethnic identification determined one's place in the new social order. The integration in this period was between Mestizo - Spanish - foreign interests and it achieved, through the most violent of methods, in forging the image of the Maya peoples as subhuman entities worthy only of contempt. It is no wonder that even the most liberal or radical of contemporary Ladino thought refuses to acknowledge this history, as it destroys all pretense of an intellectual superiority and a "progressive" standard that were supposedly inaugurated with this capitalist modernization. While contemporary Ladino ideology retains the myth of some eventual "social integration" and national reconciliation, it cannot deal with a "history" that so totally undermines the foundations of an assumed "natural" ethnic superiority and reveals the repressive and exploitive processes that created all the dimensions of this ethnic division. Simply put, one ethnic group's "emancipation" occurred at the brutal expense of the more prominent majority, and this is not the mark of a "civilized people." It is from this "history," though, that we may examine and critique later economic and political developments in Guatemala from a novel angle, exposing the numerous weaknesses inherent in the political - economic structure due to this enforced ethnic division during a period of rapid economic expansion and transformation.

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[114] This reflected the dominance of agricultural production at the time. As urban industries became more prevalent, there remained the stigma that "manual rural labor" was strictly for "Indians" where as "urban labor" was considered more dignified by its technological / urban nature. This ethnic division in the labor market is still readily apparent and is best expressed by Martínez's reference to the Ladino worker whose "superiority" is derived from his contact with scientific technology.

The Maya and the 20th Century

We may safely conclude from the evidence in the previous section that the Liberal economic and political project had few "liberal" qualities that we identify with today. The Liberal regimes only entrenched a system of private property ownership as an absolute right, and based this right on ethnic membership and wealth. What followed was a series of ruthless and corrupt personalized dictatorships, supported by the largest coffee interests, and with no concern for "liberal" political ideals e.g. free press and expression, elected representation, equality before the law. The most prominent of these personalized dictatorships was headed by Manuel Estrada Cabrera from 1898 until 1920. Under Cabrera the areas of coffee production were gradually expanded within the department of San Marcos, extended throughout southern Quetzaltenango, Sololá, and Chimaltenango, the eastern parts of Alta Verapaz and central Quiché, and for the first time into south and central Huehuetenango. It was also under Cabrera that the first important American economic ventures were established in Guatemala, reflecting the declining influence of European capital and the increasing but distinct interests of U.S. moneys. U.S. capital was never interested in coffee production directly, preferring to invest in the creation of the banana industry in the remote eastern department of Izabal and in specific large - scale infrastructure projects e.g. railways, electrical power.

What is curious about the establishment of these U.S. interests is the way in which they provoked and altered the parameters of the "national debate" over Guatemala's future, and the divisions they fostered among the ruling Ladino elite. The founding of the banana industry in

Guatemala by the United Fruit Company (UFCo) did not in itself have a dramatic impact on the general population. Banana plantations, wholly controlled by UFCo, were created in the unpopulated jungle regions of Izabal and later in the most inhospitable and unoccupied lowlands in the department of Escuintla. Consequently, the banana plantations themselves did not displace or marginalize any existing property owners, whether Maya or Ladino. In fact, the higher wages offered by the banana plantations in Izabal attracted rural laborers and the landless from the southeast region despite the terrible working conditions and accommodations extended to the workers (heat, humidity, disease). This is certainly not surprising given the structure of the existing labor relations and conditions prevalent in the rural countryside. What was to provoke a measure of hostility and "nationalistic" fervor among Ladino sectors during the early decades of the 20th century was the increasing concessions demanded by U.S. firms of Guatemalan governments (tax rates, land rents, export charges), and the degree to which U.S. companies were able to monopolize control over certain key sectors important to coffee producers (rail lines, port facilities, shipping). Discriminatory pricing practices and the preferential transportation by these companies of their own goods over the domestic coffee producers, hit hardest the medium and small size producers. This sector of coffee producers and their urban allies became strong supporters of a more "nationalistic" economic policy during the 1910s and 1920s.

Although the political machinations of the United Fruit Company, its subsidiary International Railways of Central America (IRCA), and the U.S. Electric Bond and Share Company became the quintessential example of U.S. imperialism in the Central American isthmus, in the case of Guatemala one has to question the standards utilized in critiquing this development given the character of the particular Ladino elite in power.[115] Without a doubt a combination of U.S. corporate and U.S. government powers worked closely together to pressure concessions out of various Guatemalan administrations, utilized corrupt tactics (bribery, threats) to achieve their ends, and ruthlessly enforced labor discipline and repressed attempts at unionization. None of these tactics, though, were foreign to the accepted thinking of the Ladino elite. We may assume, then, a difference in degree rather than in kind. U.S. capitalist interests did not destroy either a thriving or incipient "democratic" tradition or override labor codes and constitutional guarantees anymore than the existing Ladino elite. This provides us with a better insight into the real bases of the animosity between sectors of the Ladino elite and U.S. elites, namely the disproportionate economic advantages that derived from unequal levels of capital between the two groups. It also provides us with a clearer appraisal of the character of the "nationalistic" sentiments expressed within various Ladino sectors. Certainly these U.S. corporations had forged important allies among the Ladino elite (largest coffee interests) who sought through this alliance both preferential treatment and access to U.S. markets for their coffee industry. Unlike European capital, which had integrated with local capital and domestic elites in various ways (intermarriage, associations), U.S. capital tended to overtly exploit rather than complement the agricultural interests of the Ladinos, and in the banana industry U.S. capital retained full control over all aspects of the production process. In only a decade the value of the banana industry had increased many times over due to the high demand and the profits that were reaped. These profits, though, were repatriated rather than reinvested in improving rail lines, power facilities, or transportation networks. It is in these dimensions, and not in vague references to "national sovereignty" or an amputated "democratic" trend, that we find the real determinants of the Ladino - U.S. conflict. It had already been firmly established by the Ladino elite that "foreigners" were preferable to the Maya population. What some Ladino sectors found repugnant about this early American attitude towards Guatemala was that the Americans discriminated without remorse against the Ladinos, whereas the Ladinos considered them their intellectual equals. As it became readily apparent that U.S. capital had no interest in the larger "progress" of the nation (or in other words, would not adopt a conciliatory position vis a vis the Ladino elite), the "nationalistic" rhetoric came to the fore. This rhetoric, though, had no bearing on the Maya - Ladino relations in place, nor was it an appeal that was intended to unite Maya and Ladinos in a process of national transformation or emancipation. Ladino nationalist rhetoric was to retain this limited scope, implying only some supposed national control over the deleterious effects of foreign capital without altering the basic ethnic - social composition of Guatemalan society. There was no "democratic" character within the opposition to the increasing U.S. role in the economy and politics, and consequently it cannot be assumed that the U.S. had a direct role in sustaining the dictatorial tradition. This feature had been firmly entrenched by the existing Ladino elite well before the U.S. came to play a prominent role. It must be added that until the end of the dictatorial era in 1944, banana exports became an important export product that benefited mainly one U.S. company. In relation to the coffee industry though, the banana industry never came close to equaling the quantities or monies generated from coffee production which the Ladino elite retained control over. Thus, the Ladino elite had ample maneuverability in altering both labor and ownership conditions in their major export industry. Since they retained the Maya majority in a semi-slave condition, this Ladino elite had little in terms of a progressive political, economic, or moral standard from which to attack the role of U.S. capital in their nation. They had already proven their preference for dictatorship, forced labor, and repression in the rural countryside.

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[115] It is with the penetration of U.S. capital, particularly UFCo, that most analyses of contemporary Guatemala begin by adopting a "dependency" perspective in understanding the political scene. It is also readily apparent in Jim Handy's work where his focus in the 19th century on the Maya and the coffee industry gives way to an emphasis on U.S. imperialism in examining Guatemala in the 20th century. See Jim Handy, Gift of the Devil. (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1984).

The real political power in Guatemala lay with the coffee oligarchy throughout the first half of the 20th century. The preference for personalized dictatorships reflected inherent problems within the structure of Guatemala's coffee industry itself and its relationship to the international market. Coffee prices in Europe were subject to extreme highs and lows depending on demand and political conditions on the European continent. This resulted in either high profits or depression for Guatemalan coffee growers. During a depression the threat of political instability was not from "the masses" but from within the class structure among the coffee producers themselves. Depression was a particular problem for small and medium - size producers who were still obligated to make payments on monies borrowed during periods of prosperity from the larger coffee interests and financial backers. A marked decline in coffee prices created conditions for internecine conflict among the various sized coffee interests. In addition, these depressions severely hit the expanded administrative regimes who had borrowed heavily during times of economic prosperity. A collapse in the coffee markets, as in 1897-98, left the country bankrupt, money and property worthless, and numerous Ladino sectors in panic (growers, investors, bankers, importers) as all commercial activity was halted.

> From the political point of view, functioning agrarian capitalism in Guatemala had direct consequences on the structure of domination and control of society by the *finqueros*. Each time the coffee State was hit by the impact of an international strong economic depression, the national political scenery was presented with a brutal figure invested with exceptional dictatorial power, behind which was hidden the insecurity of the dominating classes.[116]

As J. C. Cambranes has observed, changing international conditions in the coffee markets more directly affected the political scene in Guatemala than any direct role played by U.S. capital. The fall of the dictator Cabrera in 1920 may be traced to the fortunes of the coffee industry, as his corrupt and speculative fiscal policies led to another round of financial bankruptcy and greater external control over the national economy. Throughout the 1920s the Ladino elite sectors fought over political leadership and issues of modernization, the national debt, and foreign (U.S.) control in the economy, splitting the former Liberal unity. This dispute and instability permitted a certain degree of openness in the capital which permitted the vocalization of dissent and protests from various sectors. There was also the first urban union activity. This had little bearing on the Maya majority but reflected deep concerns about the financial health of the coffee industry and the gradual displacement of European influence by North American domination. When the Great Depression of the late 1920s began to affect Guatemala, the Ladino elite coalesced around the military - landowner figure of General Jorge Ubico, electing him to the presidency in 1930.

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[116] J. C. Cambranes, p. 321.

The Maya and the Ubico Dictatorship (1930 - 1944)

The figure of General Ubico remains an enigmatic one for historical scholarship and within the Ladino conscience, representative of both the finest and most demented qualities of the dictatorial era. From the various historical sources Ubico is characterized as a ruthless paranoid, prone to pompous displays of personal heroism and grandeur. Behind these personal traits though was an obsessive administrative figure who reestablished the coffee industry and the nation's finances on a sound footing during a period of international depression. The depression effectively disrupted the commercial links between Guatemala and the European continent, leaving the U.S. as the sole source of capital and consumer markets at the start of World War II. Over time Ubico was able to secure a measure of market share in the U.S. for agricultural goods due to favorable terms for banana expansion, export taxes and land rents granted UFCo by the regime. Given the prevailing world conditions and the structure of ethnic relations within Guatemala, with or without Ubico, this adjustment would have been imposed on the Ladino elite. This simply reflected the changing balance of world forces, and the ingrained hostility of the Ladino elite to altering the direction and dimensions of their agricultural sector towards small owner / domestic production and a more diversified agricultural base. In this respect the Ladino elite and their political representatives brought this fate upon themselves, having put in place every conceivable factor (ethnic discrimination, repression, reliance on a single export) that prevented mass - based support and financial security against the effects of depression and foreign manipulation. Certainly Ubico was not going to challenge the existing constellation of ethnic and production relations, but he was willing to use the repressive powers he commanded to modify some of the more extreme features of the coffee industry, thus acting against powerful and entrenched Ladino sectors.

Ubico imposed a vicious austerity program in the early 1930s, cutting wages and staff in the public sector in an all - out effort to extract Guatemala from its debtor status. This was complemented by a heavy - handed, anti-corruption, "law and order" program that terrified Maya and Ladino sectors alike. For the first time in Guatemala's history, government officials and employees were held accountable (on pain of death or prison) for every transaction and forced to live on a meager salary with no illicit dealings permitted. In addition, greater accountability was introduced on all importing and exporting , preventing many forms of tax evasion. Not surprisingly, Ubico was able to pay off all of Guatemala's foreign debts in a relatively short period of time, and the value of the national currency rose as financial stability was recovered. During the 1930s, Guatemala was a repressive utopia: crime free, corruption - free, and totally without political conflict during the country's worst depression.

Ubico's tactics placed him in a contradictory position in relation to the more powerful sectors of the Ladino elite. Where they may have approved of his methods, they were not favorable to the levels of administrative authority wielded by Ubico and the lack of influence they had within the presidential palace. Ubico himself was openly contemptuous of the Ladino agricultural elite, most of whom had become inefficient producers preferring to live in the capital instead of maintaining, improving and developing their lands and crops. Nevertheless, Ubico was no "radical," and he was not going to confront the Ladino elite directly. What he did, though, was to confront their authority over the rural countryside by introducing a set of rural vagrancy laws, bringing the Maya labor supply under the control of the central government.

> By replacing debt peonage with the vagrancy laws, Ubico sought to improve Guatemala's image abroad. He also satisfied the requests of many landowners who had argued since the 1920s that debt peonage was ineffective and uneconomic. The vagrancy laws increased the influence of the central government, which was given the responsibility of allocating Indians among competing landowners.[117]

In this manner Ubico replaced the debt bondage system with a state - controlled, labor distribution system to the benefit of the largest landowners (who had to advance the most monies) and to the detriment of the labor contractors and smaller landowners. The Vagrancy Laws clearly reflected the prevailing attitude towards the Maya in which those with the least amount of land or no lands (hence, the Maya) were obligated to perform respectively, 100 or 150 days of labor per year for either the Ladino coffee producers or the government. The fulfilling of such obligations was recorded in work books by the coffee producers or government officials, work books that were carried by all those affected by the laws. This left in place the full weight of discrimination, manipulation, extortion and terror. Ubico also appointed officials at the departmental and municipal levels, transferring them frequently to prevent any personal affiliations from being created. As Gleijeses has noted, neither of these alterations expressed a concern with either the poverty that resulted from the depression and the agricultural practices in place, or specifically with the lot of the Maya majority. This was simply an attempt by the Ubico dictatorship to centralize administrative powers and enhance loyalty to Ubico. As Gleijeses observes, the legal authority of the landowners was actually enhanced in a curious way, by granting them an amnesty in how the Ladino landowners controlled the Maya population.

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[117] Piero Gleijeses, Shattered Hope. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991) p. 13 - 14.

> Ubico, sympathetic to the landowners' concerns, legalized murder: Decree 1816 of April 1932 exempted landowners from the consequences of any action taken to protect their goods and lands. From this to the cold - blooded murder of a stubborn Indian was a moot step. Yet, one wonders why this decree was necessary. Civilized Guatemalans had always understood the occasional need to kill an Indian.[118]

As a result, the material and psychological conditions under which the Maya lived varied little in this time period from the late 19th century. In a peculiar way, though, the abolition of the existing debt burden carried by substantial numbers of Maya families did have unintended consequences. Even though they were obligated to perform a high number of days of labor, the relief from debt payments permitted a degree of individual and community accumulation to take place.[119] This did not touch upon the pervasive discrimination or rural repression from Ladino sectors, but it represented a small reprieve for those Maya who had property or skills and could utilize small amounts of capital in freeing themselves from another round of indebtedness or seasonal labor. This represented the first significant but small step for some communities in building an alternative to poverty and forced labor.

It is during the Ubico dictatorship that we are provided for the first time with in - depth insights into both the structure of Maya community and economic life, and the character of the ethnic relations that had been established over a 70 - 80 year period (up to 1940). The separation between the views and attitudes of the Ladinos concerning the Maya, and the actual activities and accomplishments among the Maya communities were most clearly revealed through the research of the day. In the most extensive sociological study of the time, Lloyd Chester Jones outlined the parameters of Ladino thinking about the Maya peoples:

> Their attitudes (the Ladinos') toward bringing the Indians into vital connection with the government are contradictory. Often they appear to consider them an unqualified liability. "This is a land of Indians and for the Indians there is only one law - the lash," a minister of war, later elected president, is reported to have asserted. Similar statements are frequently made by both officials and laymen. Some of the latter argue that unless immigration can be stimulated, the small remaining white class will in time be submerged by the Indian flood, and the ladino, by gradually sinking into the mass of the Indian population through intermarriage, will lose such identity as he now has. As a result the government of the

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[118] Ibid., p. 13.

[119] Carlos Rafael Cabarrús, "El auge de los grupos étnicos, un resultado del capitalismo," Polémica. 3, (1982) p. 10.

> republic will have less and less popular character and the rule of dictators over an unstable population of low initiative will be perpetuated.
>
> Another group is more sanguine. They point out that the Indian forms roughly two-thirds of the Guatemalan nationality and that he is, even under his unfortunate conditions of life, successful in maintaining that position. These avow that his culture was largely destroyed in the colonial era and that the republic has not yet succeeded either in re-establishing it or in bringing the Indian into contact with modern civilization. To that task the state must set itself.[120]

What is of significance to observe about these two Ladino positions is the extent to which the main intellectual constructs of this century have represented only variations within these parameters of the Ladino debate. What is also of interest is the extent to which foreign academics long held to the view that there were no significant impediments to Maya integration except within the "primitive mind" of the Maya. Certainly the first observations made by scholars in the late 1930s and early 1940s did not support this conclusion.

The earliest studies expressed concern about the depth of the Maya - Ladino separation and its mutually hostile and "racist" dimensions, demonstrating a structured condition that did not offer much reason for optimism.

> The *ladinos* say that the Indians can not be raised above their present cultural level and should not be. They look with anxiety and distrust upon the efforts of the national government to stamp out endemic diseases, to lower the illiteracy rate, to build roads which will bring together scattered and isolated districts, to train the able-bodied men of the villages away from the ancient customs and beliefs, or from the old tribal loyalties, in the direction of one national allegiance. The *ladinos*, consequently, may be depended upon to fight any move which will give the Indians equal economic, social and political rights in the near future. The white man is determined to rule Guatemala, although two thirds of the population may be Indian.[121]

Kirk's conclusions were verified by research and evidence collected in the Maya highlands by Morris Siegel at roughly the same time. Siegel, though, emphasized the degree to which there was an ingrained "racism" common throughout all levels of Ladino society:

> A fundamental principle underlies all social relations between natives and whites. This is the concept of "white racial superiority," first promulgated during the Conquest and persisting practically unchanged to the present day. The importance of the idea that the Indians represent an "inferior species of mankind" cannot be overemphasized, for the political and economic organization of Guatemala clearly rests on a racial dichotomy that grants power and privilege to the "naturally superior group." It is known, of course, that similar racial concepts have often been used in the past solely to cover up and excuse

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[120] Chester Lloyd Jones, Guatemala: Past and Present. 1st ed. 1940, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1966) p. 106.

[121] William Kirk, "Social Change Among the Highland Indians of Guatemala," Sociology and Social Research. 23, 4 (March - April, 1939) p. 332.

> exploitation and abuse, and that these "red herrings," far from achieving the status of scientific truths, served only as tools in the hands of small, powerful cliques with which to delude their followers. In Guatemala, however, the mass of the white population seems firmly convinced that Indians are, in truth, biologically inferior and consequently deserving of the lower position in life.[122]

Siegel's evidence for such a position was overwhelming and convincing. Social relations at all levels were permeated with ethnic distinctions and discrimination by rural Ladinos. Siegel observed that "[I]ntermarriage between members of the two groups is obviously improbable."[123] While Ladino men had sexual relations with Maya women, even keeping them as concubines, "[S]imilar relationships between Indian men and white women are inconceivable (in San Miguel Acatán, at least, and probably throughout the country); in fact, the mere mention of such possibilities stimulates fierce anger in the breasts of whites."[124] Within local political structures, Ladinos held the salaried positions whereas the Maya were obligated to serve two - year terms in subordinate positions without pay. There was absolutely no interaction between Ladinos and Maya in religious practices and "[W]hites constantly sneer at the 'barbarous religious beliefs and practices' of the natives, saying that Indians are 'pagans, not Catholics.'"[125] It was within the school system itself that Siegel saw these distinctions being drawn at a young age and perpetuated, as Maya students entered with little knowledge of Spanish and the teachers (always Ladino) knew nothing of the Maya languages.

> The fact that classes consist of Indian and white pupils creates situations early in life that influence the attitudes of members of both groups most vitally. White youngsters, by virtue of their fluency in Spanish, are able to make comparatively rapid advances in studies, while native children appear extremely backward, even stupid. There soon develops among whites the belief that Indians are "naturally stupid," that they are inferior and should be treated accordingly. This opinion is repeatedly expressed by teachers and other whites. Native children, at the same time, learn to accept the stigma of inferiority as merited simply because they are confronted almost daily with "proofs" of white superiority in school.[126]

As the author concluded, the education system laid the foundation for what then appeared as a "natural superiority," serving to widen the cultural gap.

Within the local economic realm, "[A]ttitudes regarding occupations bear witness to the fundamental distinction between Indian and white."[127] Ladinos rarely worked on the coffee plantation as field laborers but occupied all higher - level positions, and all labor contractors were Ladino. There were also clear divisions drawn between those who performed "manual labor" locally, which ethnic group worked for another, and even an ethnically defined sexual division of labor:

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[122] Morris Siegel, "Resistances to Culture Change In Western Guatemala," Sociology and Social Research. 25 (1941) p. 421.

[123] Ibid., p. 421.

[124] Ibid., p. 421.

[125] Ibid., p. 424.

[126] Ibid., p. 425.

[127] Ibid., p. 423.

> Indians serve as carriers for whites, trudging long distances up and down steep mountains with enormous loads strapped to their backs. It is inconceivable to the white mind the non-Indians should carry burdens for hire. While household service, laundering, and kitchen work are considered the proper tasks of natives, white women can perform these labors only by sacrificing considerable prestige in the community, something which they value greatly. Finally, though Indians commonly work for whites, in no case do whites become the employees of Indians.[128]

Due to the clear ethnic divisions within the numerous dimensions of community life in the highlands, Siegel expressed no hope that acculturation or integration could occur in the near future. The researcher did not deny that Maya and Ladinos lived side by side and interacted at a number of different levels, but he pointed out the supremacist and racist ways in which the Ladino ethnic group related to the Maya. Moreover, Siegel observed that the Maya did not accept this condition passively. "Outward manifestations of hostility are relatively scarce, partly because of the quick and harsh penalties imposed in the past on rebellious native groups. Instead, Indian hostility takes the form of a widespread, if passive, resistance to "white ways," and "a stubborn retention of native beliefs and practices."[129] This resistance, Siegel observed, was revealed in the Maya avoidance of political service, keeping of their children out of public schools, wearing native dress, and through the use of their own languages over Spanish. Also, public pressure including ostracization was utilized against community members who associated with, had sexual relations with, or worked for Ladinos. As he concluded, any cultural exchange was next to impossible under these conditions, and integration to any extent, except in the pernicious forms in place, was out of the question.

In a more recent historical and descriptive anthropological work on a Maya community in the highlands, Douglas Brintnall superbly captured the attitudes, practices and sentiments that underlay Ladino - Maya relations during this period and for decades to follow. Ladino attitudes may be defined as simply vicious in an attempt to continually affirm their "superiority":

> Ladinos had the upper hand - economically, politically and culturally - and they regarded themselves as a superior, more civilized people living among uncultured natives. From the Ladino point of view, at best the Indians were like children who needed paternalistic guidance and care, but at worst the Indians were sly, lazy, dumb and recalcitrant and had to

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[128] Ibid., p. 424.
[129] Ibid., p. 429.

> be sternly disciplined with hard labor, fines, jailing and beatings. The Ladinos expected to be treated as superiors by the Indians - to be served first in the general stores, to ride in the more comfortable front seats of buses, to order Indians around in the informal, and to receive constant signs of deference and submissiveness.[130]

In contrast, all Maya had to accept this inferior role in fear of retribution even though they fully understood the injustice and the bases of this Ladino attitude.

> On their part, the Indians did act very humbly when in the presence of Ladinos, bowing their heads and staring at the ground as they received Ladino orders. Indians were genuinely afraid - afraid that they would be ordered to do something and afraid that they would be struck if they did not understand or did not move fast enough. Still, underneath the outwardly submissive manner of the Indians, along with real feelings of dependence, inadequacy and inferiority, there was also a bitter resentment of the Ladinos - the Ladino "vultures" and "dogs" who had arrived only recently, stole and tricked people out of their lands, and made a previously independent people into slaves.[131]

From these insights it remains somewhat of a mystery as to how Sol Tax and Robert Redfield, who became the dominant theorists on the Maya in Guatemala, and numerous other scholars could argue that the existing ethnic relations posed no problem to social integration, or that any constraints resided almost wholly within the Maya culture.[132] As noted in the previous chapter, the Tax and Redfield perspective was to dominate anthropological and sociological research into the late 1960s, despite all the evidence to the contrary. From this overview it also becomes evident that the more radical Marxist - dependency perspective, whose faith lay in Maya integration through proletarianization, has failed to recognize the deep structures and sentiments that were established in the late 1800s and the forces that perpetuate them.

Kirk and Siegel were the first (and the last for several decades) to comment on the profoundly contradictory and ill-established social and political views of the dominant Ladino group. Kirk observed that the best informed Ladinos deplored and lamented the cultural differences that divided the country, yet they also advanced "the argument that the government must get enough work out of the Indians to make progress possible, and at the same time keep the Indians in a position where they will not threaten the power of the ruling class."[133] As well, they firmly held to the view that the Maya were "incapable of asserting any intergroup allegiance or any capacity for self - government on a large scale"[134] even though this seems the most obvious way to begin to bridge the cultural gap. Siegel also noted that the cultural denigration practiced by the Ladinos often expressed a clear double standard with no reflection on the part of the Ladinos. As an example he observed that the Maya held to their traditional marriage customs ignoring legal and religious sanction. Ladinos viewed these marriage practices with contempt, stating that "Indians live together like animals," yet "[C]uriously, many of these selfsame whites have never obtained either legal or religious sanction for their marriages."[135] As noted previously, the Ladinos viewed the Maya of the highlands as a savage and hostile people, suggesting that the Maya peoples were prone to "rise up" against the "progressive efforts" of the Ladino inhabitants. This perception served to justify the need for extreme and continued repression against any collective protest or response by a single Maya community. Yet Siegel, who spent a mere ten months in the highlands, was able to point out that the chances for such a revolt were "extremely small":

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[130] Douglas Brintnall (1979), p.172

[131] Ibid., p. 172 - 173.

[132] Other scholars include John Gillin, Nathan Whetten, Richard Adams, Ralph Beals, Juan de Dios Rosales. See articles and commentary in Jorge Luis Arriola, ed., Integración Social en Guatemala. (Guatemala, 1956). Dissenting positions from this perspective may be seen in the article by Melvin Tumin and the commentary of Robert Ewald.

[133] Kirk, p. 331 -332.

> The Indian population of Guatemala is composed of numerous local groups speaking diverse dialects that are mutually unintelligible. These local groups have few, if any, interests in common and none sufficiently strong to cut across dividing barriers and whip the natives together into a united people. Hostility to whites is a characteristic shared by most Indians, but the sentiment is externalized in a passive resistance which, though general throughout the country, is actually made up of individual (local group) expressions.[136]

Although neither Siegel nor Kirk developed these insights into a larger theoretical understanding of regional or ethnic relations, their works nevertheless offered numerous penetrating insights concerning the structure of Ladino - Maya relations, none of which became the established "wisdom" on the Maya in Guatemalan society.[137]

The Maya and the Rural Power Structure (1940s)

From the anthropological and sociological research completed during the 1930s and 1940s, we are provided with a fairly accurate picture of the structure of rural ethnic / power relationships and how the Maya fared in this environment. We may say with a high degree of certainty that virtually all of the formal political and administrative posts recognized by the central government were filled by Ladinos. This included the most important community political structures (mayors and administrators), police, school teachers and the local legal structure. Through this network rural Ladinos maintained their connection and affiliation with the larger urban centers, and in effect were never left isolated from the "national" context. In addition, there was an informal structure of representation made up of prominent Maya leaders (generally based on age, wealth and experience) that mediated the formal Ladino structures and attempted to retain some level of control over Maya affairs, resolving conflicts that involved Maya community members. The informal Maya structure included a number of secondary and "apprenticeship" roles which entailed a series of duties related to the Maya syncretism of religious and public positions. In contrast to the Ladino structures, Maya positions were often time - consuming, lacked any remuneration, and were fulfilled at the expense of other economic activities (working lands), and thus involved a heavy financial and personal burden over the time period in which these duties had to be performed. Although this informal Maya authority structure held considerable respect and influence over the lives of its Maya community members, it still lacked any status or influence in contesting Ladino authority at any level of society. As a consequence, local and national economic and political conditions were wholly determined by Ladinos, leaving the Maya to contend with them and adjust accordingly on pain of massive retribution should they organize and protest their condition or Ladino prerogatives.

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[134] Kirk, p. 332.
[135] Siegel, p. 426.
[136] Ibid., p. 430.
[137] See Tax and Redford's refutation of Siegel's understanding of ethnic relations in the previous chapter.

Where my analysis of the Maya peoples differentiates itself from previous analyses and evaluations is on the question of what was (and is), the real strength behind the persistence of the Maya communities, Maya culture, and a Maya identity, separate from the dominant Ladino - Western identity. Numerous anthropological and sociological works have suggested that there is something about the specific "community" that preserves, protects and enhances what is characteristic of being Maya, whether dress patterns, local dialects, religious - political practices, attitudes, cosmology. In this respect, a considerable amount of attention was and remains directed towards understanding the political - religious structure, the duty - based roles ingrained in these structures, and the significance of the varied religious rites and festivals (a rich practice of worshipping the figures of the Catholic saints and natural forces through a Maya interpretive perspective related to the growing season). It has often been stated that these features play a paramount role in strengthening community identification and have secured a measure of community autonomy from the dominant Ladino politics and culture. It has also been argued in the past, but more recently with the renewed "community - state" theoretical dichotomy, that the specific "community" structure constitutes the basis for an intentional Maya "resistance" to Ladino authority and penetration.

The evidence to support such conclusions is weak if we reflect on the history of Guatemala and developments since the late 1800s. At one level it is impossible to prioritize a "community" as an entity capable of withstanding the Ladino - Western economic, cultural, and political forces that surround it. Certainly the specific Maya communities that were based in the south - eastern region of Guatemala were never able to withstand the disintegrating effects of Spanish colonization. Many of these "communities" were dismantled and submerged among Spanish - Mestizo landowners leading to the disuse of specific Maya languages, dress and social practices, and the disappearance of a "community identification." Secondly, it cannot be stated with any certainty that the "community" acts as a brake or limit on the powers and demands of the "state" or Ladino agrarian elite. As the installation of the coffee industry clearly revealed, when the "state" and private Ladino interests desired a vast coffee export industry it was fully inaugurated at the total expense of the Maya. It has been documented how few qualms were expressed within Ladino quarters about the methods utilized in, or the results of, destroying hundreds of Maya communities and expropriating the lands of thousands more. This was a worst - case scenario for the Maya, and did not reflect an outcome based on accommodation or the reconciliation of "community" power with "state" power. Instead, the coffee industry developed all those lands that were both the best for growing coffee and were accessible (thus profitable) in terms of infrastructure. The industry expanded on the basis of these two factors well into the 20th century. Those lands the Maya retained were either unusable or inaccessible, and thus not viable for profitable coffee production. As a result, it would be illusory to suggest that the "community" imparts some sort of restrictive force against the worst excesses of Ladino economic and political aspirations. The history of the coffee industry in Guatemala demonstrates that when Ladino - foreign wealth and repressive power are combined, the Maya have had few strengths in preventing the end result. It might be objected that this line of argumentation implies then that the Maya peoples and their culture are immersed in an extremely precarious setting over which they exert little control. This is exactly the point I intend to outline in examining the rural power structure into which the Maya had become integrated since the late 1800s.

Though at first sight this may be an obvious point, the real source of the Maya peoples' "cultural preservation" lies not in the unique features of any particular Maya community, but in their sheer numerical strength across the central and northern highlands. It is from within this mass of "distinct" peoples that we find the basis for the numerous economic and cultural activities that fosters and preserves the Maya languages, distinctive attire, community structures and community identity. What weighs heavily upon the Ladino mind concerning the "Indian problem" is not any supposed "power" emanating from the community structure, but the obvious preponderance of Maya communities throughout the rural countryside in which the goal of dismantling (integrating) or annihilating these communities (both of which are legitimate strains of thought within Ladino circles) is presented as an overwhelming but necessary task. Justification is not the problem, but the means and the methods have restricted action for "dealing" with such a radical transformation. As a consequence, the cultural "success" of the Maya in the highlands to date lies to a large extent in the specific geographical terrain which they occupy and identify with, a terrain that establishes several constraints on the types of capitalist exploitation that may be undertaken due to the levels of capital required to transform these areas into profitable regions. As noted, though, the expansion of the coffee industry over time clearly demonstrated that when desired, Ladino - foreign elites were quite capable of transforming and altering this terrain at the expense of the Maya in order to achieve a desired end. As will be documented in later chapters, this logic of capitalist development was more fully played out during the 1970s and 1980s, and again despite Maya forms of protest and resistance. And as observed previously, there is good reason to remain concerned about the position of the Maya given the precariousness of their communities in relation to Ladino - foreign economic forces. For this reason, Maya community and cultural attributes cannot be translated into expressions of "political power," nor do these attributes in themselves sustain a community. As mentioned, I will argue that the cultural strength of the Maya is derived from their numerical preponderance and their placement across the highlands.

The particular geography of the Guatemalan highlands is worth describing as it has a direct bearing on the structure of Maya community life and the limits imposed on large scale capitalist development. In the early 1940s it was observed that the Maya highlands were "badly broken" by a series of volcanoes and "ranges of hills," and that "drainage has cut deeply into the volcanic ash, almost destroying the semblance of a plateau, and has divided the upland into a series of mesas, separated from one another by a labyrinth of thousand - foot chasms."[138] This geography continued into the non - volcanic highlands of Alta Verapaz and Huehuetenango, regions also "deeply dissected."

> Thus, although the Guatemalan upland has the general appearance of a plateau, the habitable land is divided into numerous small isolated districts. As a consequence, settlement takes the form of many separate communities, each more or less effectively cut off from its neighbors, and each forced to a high degree to center its life and activities within its own limits.[139]

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[138] George McBride and Merle McBride, "Highland Guatemala and Its Maya Communities," The Geographical Review. 32, 2 (April, 1942) p. 253 -254.

[139] Ibid., p. 255.

The highlands have also been densely covered by coniferous forests. These highland features give way to lowlands again in the north of Huehuetenango, El Quiché, and Alta Verapaz, and all of El Petén. This northern lowland region is characterized by dense tropical jungle terrain and except for a small and remote population of Maya in El Petén, had not been settled by either Maya or Ladinos as of the middle of this century. As George and Merle McBride observed, the highlands comprised a region of rugged terrain with a temperate climate which had generally been considered inhospitable to the Spanish colonizers. It must be added that this type of geography has made the introduction of transportation facilities, communication networks and other infrastructure (electric power) exceedingly difficult. This has limited both the types of export crops that could be produced and the profitability of those that were possible to be produced unless these natural geographical restrictions were overcome. In addition, this geography imposed harsh restrictions on the mobility of the Maya themselves and increased their isolation from other communities and regions of Maya concentration.

Despite the difficult natural features of the Maya highlands, the Maya had established and maintained an elaborate marketing system for their agricultural and artisanal commodities, a system which extended from Mexico (Chiapas) down into northern El Salvador. Although the Maya have often been characterized as mere "subsistence producers" or as a "subsistence peasantry," living off their small plots of land, there is little evidence to support such a narrow or reductionist assessment.[140] In fact, more perceptive observers remarked that this marketing system was unparalleled for its diversity of goods and distance compared to the rest of Central America and most of South America. The basis of this marketing system was the dominance of agricultural production among the majority of Maya landowners. Hence the ownership of some land was still of central importance to Maya life and community identification.

> Right to alienate it is narrowly restricted by custom, and it is most unusual for land to be sold, particularly to anyone outside the community. The Indians deeply resent and commonly oppose by force any intrusion into the community territory, even by neighboring villages of the same linguistic group. All the land that is not regularly tilled is still held communally and administered as a community possession. The right to pasture such land, to cut logs from it, to collect firewood, or even to gather pine needles to scatter on the floor is restricted to members of the community.[141]

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[140] Often this "subsistence" categorization is counterposed to the more "dynamic" agro - export industry. Earlier in this century this was used to demonstrate the need for Maya integration into the "national economy" and later utilized to demonstrate how agro - export production was destroying the peasantry. Neither conceptualization is accurate regarding the Maya.

[141] Ibid., 260 - 261.

Although the land had an important symbolic and community attachment, the consumption and selling of produce from these lands was supplemented by a rich, specialized and diversified artisanal and specialty foodstuffs tradition. It is this aspect of the Maya communities that has probably been the most overlooked in examining the overall strength of the Maya cultural traditions, yet it is clearly a complex facet of Maya economic and cultural life which differentiates the Maya from the sphere of simple "subsistence production." From across the highlands various areas or a community were specialized in particular goods of foodstuffs depending on what the natural terrain offered for materials or production, and depending on the set of skills that were practiced and maintained from one generation to the next. In terms of foodstuffs, this varied from areas where livestock were raised (sheep, pigs, cattle, chickens, turkeys) to fish, seafood, and surpluses of the staples of corn, beans, rice, squash plants, chilies, or specialty crops such as onions, garlic, wheat, etc. Weaving was a common skill among the Maya women, but the actual materials (wool or cotton) were produced and dyed only in certain areas. Other communities or areas specialized in hand made furniture, pottery, cookware, and implements. Specific communities enjoyed a virtual monopoly in the production and selling of particular commodities, and it was not uncommon for a family to be fully dedicated to either producing or marketing non-agricultural goods for a livelihood instead of being dedicated to agricultural production.[142] The real dynamism and diversity that this market system expressed was largely due to the intricate skills and imagination of the Maya women. Although the men were more obviously recognized for their work in the fields, the carrying of heavy loads to market, and their presence in the political - religious structures, it was the division of labor between the sexes in each household and the individual skills of the women that often meant the difference between simple subsistence and surplus production.

The market system itself was comprised of "a rather elaborate system of exchange" with an entrenched meeting schedule.

> Nearly every village has its market, to which the inhabitants of adjacent villages resort and to which professional traders make journeys of many miles with hundred - pound packs on their backs. The markets of neighboring villages are held on different days.
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> In certain of the towns, well situated on old highways of trade, the markets have become great regional centers of exchange, and goods are brought to them from all parts of

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[142] Felix Webster McBryde, Cultural and Historical Geography of Southwest Guatemala. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1945), and Sololá: A Guatemalan Town and Cakchiquel Market Center. (New Orleans: Tulane University, 1933). Ruth Bunzel, Chichicastenango: A Guatemalan Town. (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1952). Ruben Reina, The Law of the Saints. (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1966).

> Guatemala and adjoining districts in Mexico, Honduras, and Salvador. Products of the lowlands as well as of the highlands are found there, but only on market days.[143]

Although there are many features about this system that I will not detail, what is important to observe is that this system was highly integrated, specialized and to a large extent "informal." Although virtually unrecognized in its importance by the Ladino elite, it was the main source of affordable produce and goods for large numbers of Ladinos in contrast to imported or Ladino - produced goods and foodstuffs. In addition, the continued value of this market system for the Maya themselves is inestimable, since Ladino wages were almost meaningless beyond the specific time frame involving seasonal labor, and given the fact that the Maya had few opportunities within the Ladino economic and political spheres. As noted, the large numbers of Maya producers integrated into this system of exchange sustained all other aspects of "community life."

As with any market system, though, the monies were not equally disbursed across or within communities or regions. Geographical and climatic conditions established certain natural advantages for some communities and disadvantages for others, while the degrees and forms of Ladino penetration into different areas of the highlands acted as a "double - edged knife." While the Ladino presence often was a detriment to the communities generally (loss of communal lands and of the best irrigated / productive lands) the introduction of better forms of transportation (buses, trucks) and improved road systems was an advantage to specific families or communities. If they had not lost all their land, and/or were in a position financially to utilize these infrastructure improvements for expanding into new urban - rural markets, these Maya groups were to profit from the massive movement of seasonal labor through their areas or their ability to reach various Ladino urban centers, including the capital. As a result, a combination of natural and Ladino - created conditions expanded opportunities for some while it worked to the detriment of others. There was a differentiation starting to take place among the Maya, but this was based on community placement within this exchange system rather than in terms of pure "class" categories. It makes no sense to talk of a "working class" or "bourgeoisie" in analyzing the Maya in this period since wage labor was only a fraction of year - round survival and a Maya family was in all likelihood devoted to several forms of economic activity in the course of a year. This could include: seasonal labor for Ladino landowners and/or non-capitalist Maya producers, subsistence and/or surplus agricultural production, and small scale artisanal or petty commodity production and/or sales. The levels of "capital" per family or per community were relatively small, and entailed absolutely no political control over the conditions of investment or profit - making.

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[143] George McBride and Merle McBride, (1942) p. 262 - 263.

Despite the fact that the Maya peoples held many diverse skills as producers and marketers, we must be careful not to "romanticize" the Maya existence in this period. Most communities were fraught with considerable problems, and life was extremely hard even with the natural or Ladino - created advantages for some Maya. As has been stressed, the Maya persisted in a rural environment plagued by the arbitrary violence or "justice" of the Ladino landowners, administrators and legal system. In addition, many community obligations and the expenses for religious devotion and celebration exacted an onerous financial burden on families and communities. Alcohol abuse was rampant and terribly destructive to the individuals and families involved, leading to indebtedness and the possible loss of one's lands. Attempts at curbing such conditions were neither defended nor supported by local or national Ladino elites, as revealed by William Kirk:

> Since the Protestant missionaries preach total abstinence, their religion does not make a strong appeal to the Indian mind. A possible exception may be the town of Nahuala where the dry law has been in force for many years. The community paid the government each year an amount equivalent to the tax on the sale of liquor in other towns of the same size. Recently young men have been caught bootlegging and a cantina has been opened over the protests of the natives.[144]

Both the financial obligations related to religious devotion and the problems of alcohol consumption benefited only a large and voracious class of Ladino merchants, middlemen, and labor contractors stationed throughout the highlands.[145] For these Ladino sectors, the numerous Maya religious traditions and practices represented but a source of rapid wealth (monies, lands) through the sale of alcohol and goods on credit. In a matter of days a Maya family with some land and money could be reduced to either landless renters and/or wage laborers on a coastal plantation, with no legal recourse and no community power to rectify their situation. In addition, and in spite of the termination of the Vagrancy Laws with the fall of the Ubico dictatorship, several areas of the highlands were undergoing an acute land shortage due to the increase in the Maya population and the unavailability of local lands. This served to ensure the "necessary" labor for the Ladino coffee interests without recourse to state force. Nevertheless, the pernicious system of labor contracting persisted for several decades into the future.

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[144] Kirk, p. 329.

[145] It is no surprise that one of the first and largest industries in Guatemala was the *beverage* industry, which today remains in the hands of a couple of extremely wealthy families whose wealth is unparalleled in relation to most Ladino land owners and other domestic elites.

The Maya and the Revolution (1944 - 1954)

The previous historical analysis offers us a broad set of criteria from which to reassess the ideology and political achievements of the revolutionary decade. The importance of this critique is to emphasize the distinct historical experiences for the Maya and for the Ladinos that evolved out of this period. As discussed in the previous chapter, the 1944-54 decade of "revolution," and its abrupt cancellation by reactionary Guatemalan and U.S. forces, became established as a historical benchmark for Ladinos and for the later adherents to a class - dependency perspective. As was also noted in the previous chapter, the fall of Ubico was almost wholly an event confined to the capital of Guatemala City with no participation from Ladinos or Maya living in the rural countryside. On the one hand this reflected the concentration of economic and political forces in the capital, whether large landowners, businessmen, bankers, the military, the university, the Catholic Church, or professionals. On the other hand it reflected a clear division between those who had a vision of broad "national change" and those who did not, or the Ladino urban interests versus the Ladino rural interests, all powerfully positioned within one urban center. In this constellation of forces it can be said with certainty that the Maya majority were the most ignored and intentionally marginalized sector as national change took place, and this was unmistakably expressed through the types of debates and concerns that were to preoccupy Arévalo, Arbenz and the Ladino elite. Certainly there was a common goal of renewal and "democracy" that united diverse sectors against General Ubico and then General Ponce, but when it came to institutionalizing the political and economic transformation from a centralized dictatorship, these sectors quickly divided. It was during this process of division and conflict that the most progressive Ladino sectors were afforded several opportunities to garner Maya support for their economic and political project. This never took place as neither the project nor the attitudes of the progressive Ladino sectors envisioned Maya participation, involvement, or even their direct benefit from national transformation.

The surprising and rapid resignation of General Ubico, and the military's role in overthrowing Ubico's hand-picked successor General Ponce, only served to retain and strengthen the racist and discriminatory attitudes among Ladinos as rural Maya allies were not necessary in a protracted struggle against the dictatorship. The "popular" character of this political change must really be questioned. Most noteworthy is the fact that shortly after the fall of General Ponce and prior to the election of Arévalo, one of the largest single massacres of Maya people in

Guatemala's recent history was undertaken by the transitional triumvirate. Piero Gleijeses has provided the best available review of this event:

> The countryside had remained quiet while urban Guatemala had turned against Ponce. But on October 22, 1944, two days after Ponce's demise, violence erupted at Patzicía, a small, predominantly Indian community about fifty miles west of the capital. "Armed with axes, machetes, clubs, stones and knives," approximately 1,000 Indians rose in a spontaneous outburst, killing more than twenty Ladinos. They chanted slogans in honor of "our General Ponce," but above all they cried: "We want land!" The junta reacted swiftly. Soldiers were dispatched at once, and the rebellious Indians were punished in the traditional manner: with a bloodbath. "The troops summarily shot the rebels. They killed women, children and men indiscriminately," relates one of the few accounts of the episode; the exact death toll will never be known, but at least nine hundred Indians were killed. "This ... would act as a warning throughout the Republic for any other disorders of this nature," the chief of staff of the Guatemalan army explained. In urban Guatemala no voices questioned the ferocity of the repression. This silence was considered auspicious by the landed elite, as was the fact that the revolt had encountered "the most drastic response of which the white and Ladino population is capable," in the words of the U.S. ambassador.[146]

The massacre did not provoke remorse among Ladino sectors but did engender fear. As Richard Adams remarks in his review of press reports at the time, the massacre was telling of Ladino behavior "in the almost total absence of concern about what happened to the Indians. The latter are merely an 'unaccountable number of cadavers,' whereas details on the number of ladinos killed and the number given succor are carefully recorded."[147] The roots of this conflict were of no concern to the new "revolutionary" elite, even though the reasons for the hostility were quite evident:

> The violence was not simply a response to exhortations of a *comandante* loyal to Ponce. The wealthier Ladinos of the town center had monopolized land and credit in a community in which seventy - five percent of the 7,000 inhabitants were Indian, but 313 Ladinos owned more land than all of the Indians combined. All reports from this community during this period indicate substantial ethnic tension.[148]

This was not a governing elite who would critically examine the history of Maya - Ladino relations and the bases of an assumed "Ladino superiority." As Adams' research demonstrates through his examination of press editorials, the new - found press freedoms were used to lament the "Indian" character of Guatemalan society and to express and justify long held antipathies and caricatures of the Maya peoples, e.g. "Indians are low, lazy, despicable; incapable of self direction; must be controlled for their labor power; and should be "regenerated" without altering the existing power structure."[149] A graphic example of this editorial style, that posits "nationhood" versus "Indian" culture, is cited by Adams:

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[146] Gleijeses, (1991) p. 31. General Ponce had offered lands to Indian communities who supported his efforts to stay in power, something the "revolutionaries" were not willing to do and instilling the impression that the Maya were by nature "reactionary" and supporters of the old dictatorship.

[147] Richard Adams, "Ethnic Images and Strategies in 1944," in Carol Smith,ed., (1990), p. 146.

[148] Jim Handy, "'A Sea of Indians,' Ethnic Conflict In Guatemala." The Americas. XLVI, 2 (Oct., 1989) p. 194.

> For these reasons, to strengthen the Indian culture is to condemn our country to eternal weakness, a perpetual cultural dualism, to be always a nation of irredeemable Indians without a continental personality. Because of this, our Indians must be westernized or destroyed; but we should not keep them in their entrenched static state because we will then be only a country for tourism; or curiosities, a kind of zoo for the entertainment of tourists, but never a nation.[150]

As Adams concludes in his review of the press, the "indigenismo of this period was a mestizo invention that reflected a recognition that Indians were mistreated but refused to allow for an examination of the causes that produced it."[151] Such was the content of the new press freedoms which reflected the Ladino middle - class sentiments so well, emphasizing a non-Maya national identity to be utilized against the predatory effects of U.S. capital. This was, and largely remains, the defining quality of Guatemalan "nationalism." For obvious reasons it is not an ideology that extols or embraces all the "people" of Guatemala.

It is not my intention to review in depth the various individual figures, organizations, and dimensions of the 1944-54 period, but only to examine a few of the economic and political trends which took place in this period of time.[152] At one level the nationalistic rhetoric of the Arévalo and Arbenz governments cannot be discounted, as it led to the first steps towards putting in place a "national" infrastructure that conflicted with the monopolistic control of U.S. corporations. On another level, though, the economic programs promoted by Arévalo and Arbenz deviated little in principle from those initiated under Ubico. These programs included the expansion and diversification of the agro - export industry (cotton, sugar cane, cattle), efforts to make the export agriculture sector more technically and scientifically efficient, protective legislation and financial aid to support rural and urban capitalization, and the extension of state - controlled facilities (schools, health clinics, administration) throughout rural and urban areas (mainly Ladino - dominated regions). In this respect, the later attempt by Arbenz at "land reform" appears as only a logical extension to these broader modernization efforts, and was expressed in just these terms at the time (1952) that he revealed the dimensions of the land reform program. Though rhetorically humanitarian concerns were expressed in reference to the need for land reform, it did not address the immediate poverty and plight of the rural poor (hence, the Maya), nor were state resources directed specifically towards alleviating the condition of those communities most affected by an acute land shortage and the fate of seasonal employment. As such, only the traditional "liberal economic" views of a linear process of industrialization were more strongly wedded to a middle - class vision of "nationalist" development.

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[149] Descriptions from R. Adams in Carol Smith, ed., (1990).

[150] Ovidio Rodas Corzo in La Hora. Feb. 19 - 20, 1945, cited in R. Adams in Carol Smith, ed., (1990) p. 151.

[151] Ibid., p. 152.

[152] For more detail on this period see the works of Piero Gleijeses (1991) and Jim Handy (1984), and the previous chapter.

Politically then, both Arévalo and Arbenz contended with only the concerns of the Ladino minority, attempting to reconcile and mollify the more radical or reactionary of the various Ladino factions. Much of the ideological cohesion for this project was provided through "nationalist" rhetoric and actions such as supporting the urban unions and particularly those within U.S. corporations, attacking the practices of U.S. companies, and modernizing the infrastructure for agro - export production. What is noteworthy is the fact that rural unionization was not permitted under Arévalo. Under Arbenz rural unionization was more openly promoted, increased membership, though, being most evident in relation to the agrarian reform which involved the setting up of local committees.[153] Consequently, neither union activity nor political party activity by Arévalo and Arbenz was effectively used as an instrument to transform Ladino - Maya relations in the countryside to build a solid coalition behind the reforms. In fact, by the time Arbenz introduced the land reform program, his administration had become extremely centralized in reaction to Ladino elite pressure and U.S. hostility. What resulted was a heightened dichotomy between the capital and the rural countryside as the land reform was implemented. Since the basic structures of Ladino - Maya relations in the highlands had not been altered to any significant degree, the Maya were never in a position to advance or act on the ideals of the "revolution" like their Ladino counterparts. The Maya were not allowed to organize or protest in defining their own specific concerns and desired changes. The agrarian reform established no special status or privileges for the Maya areas most affected by landlessness, but targeted those Ladinos with the most idle or "inefficient" lands. For the most part, the prevailing attitudes among the Ladino population and the revolutionary elite never permitted a vision of "revolutionary" ethnic relations. In addition, it must be noted that the economic successes that Arbenz and Arévalo enjoyed were largely a result of high world prices for coffee at the time, providing their respective governments with high levels of revenue. This suggests another strong motive for not disrupting the existing economic and ethnic relations in the Maya highlands.

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[153] P. Gleijeses (1991), p. 172.

The scholarship in assessing this period is thus somewhat mixed. Those scholars who attempt to defend the gains achieved under Arévalo and Arbenz have also tended to ignore the structure of rural power and to utilize a caricature of the Maya peoples in defending the reasoning of Arévalo and Arbenz for not involving the Maya directly in "national" change. This has taken the form of denigrating the Maya mind set, suggesting some strong ties of loyalty between the Maya and the Ubico - Ponce regimes (preference for dictatorial figures), or promoting the idea that the Maya communities were controlled by powerful "conservative" Maya *principales* (informal mayors) who resisted the democratic and economic changes underway. Again, there is a strong tendency to criticize the Maya without regard to: the larger Ladino power structure and practices in which the Maya were enmeshed; the urban Ladino character of the "revolution" and the concomitant discriminatory attitudes towards the Maya; and the not - so - revolutionary character of the policies instituted under Arévalo and Arbenz in relation to the Maya. We may ask then, what were the real gains in this period for the Maya? A recent pro-Maya publication, that is also supportive of the Arévalo - Arbenz era, is revealing in this respect.[154] It cites the establishment of an "Indian Institute" (which had no powers to influence or decide policy), the activities of cultural missions, and a more decentralized health and education system, "but these were small pilot projects that did not significantly involve or alter most Indian communities, and the democratic experiment was cut short before it made significant inroads into these areas."[155] The one major gain cited was that agrarian committees were formed in "some Indian areas" in conjunction with the agrarian reform "which functioned as grassroots organizations for popular participation."[156] As observed, though, this was not intended to benefit the Maya directly and was implemented some nine years after the "revolution" began. The only other effect of the revolution mentioned is that the most impoverished Maya were still forced to migrate to the coast for wages where they came in contact with "nascent agricultural workers' unions on the coast" and "returned to their villages with new ideas."[157] Evidence of tangible and direct benefits are generally lacking, as is any reference in this work to the Maya benefiting directly from the land reform program. Rather surprisingly, this work points to the "principales" as the main detriment to democratic and revolutionary change in the countryside and not the Ladino - dominated rural and urban structures. The role of the principales in this period, and after, has become the prime target for denigration even though there was no unity or concerted effort to restrict political change from this sector.[158] In light of Ladino attitudes, the rural repression, and the lack of strong government institutions and protection, the evidence to condemn outright these informal Maya leaders is weak and pernicious, and extremely narrow in its analysis. In a recent work on the contemporary Maya refugees, Beatrice Manz forthrightly states that the "most important political period of contemporary Guatemala, the democratic period of 1944 - 1954, had little direct impact in the Indian highlands."[159] Given the discriminatory attitudes of the Ladinos, the perspective of the Ladino elites, and the capitalist modernization project put in motion, the onus is really on the defenders of the Arévalo - Arbenz mandate to demonstrate how (and not potentially) the revolution benefited the Maya, and thus the numerical majority, overall.

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[154] Luisa Frank and Philip Wheaton, Indian Guatemala: Path to Liberation. (Washington: EPICA, 1984).
[155] Ibid., p. 27.
[156] Ibid., p. 27.
[157] Ibid., p. 28.

It may be asked: what could have been some of the real gains achieved by the revolutionary elite in relation to the Maya had they not been restricted by their own perceptions and political - economic thinking? In this respect the Ladino revolutionaries were extended a host of options varying from the most radical to reformist, all of which would have strengthened these "revolutionary" forces by 1954. On the most radical extreme there was room to question the legitimacy of Ladino landownership throughout the Maya highlands, since there is no evidence that these land titles went back to the colonial era but were by and large quite recent acquisitions. Secondly, to ensure a long lasting transformation in the countryside strong measures were needed to curb the abusive Ladino - Maya relationship, taking all repressive powers away from Ladino landowners, merchants, contractors and administrators. Thirdly, the Maya had to be brought, through their community leaders, directly into the national debates and given formal control over all community structures backed financially, politically and morally by the central government. This would have served to abolish all Ladino symbols of status and power in the highlands. As a more reformist agenda, the promotion and legal requirement of rural unionization for all permanent and seasonal workers could have put in place a dynamic for altering worker - landowner, Maya - Ladino relations. Education and employment opportunities could have favored Maya youth, the unemployed and the landless. In a ten year period this emphasis could have dramatically altered the traditional Ladino monopoly over administrative and educational positions, and reshaped Ladino attitudes and government - community relations. Most importantly, the simple act of restricting Ladino repression and protecting a degree of community autonomy and assertiveness could have increased the level of Maya support and brought Maya concerns into the debates. It is in this sphere of "possiblilities," not in some linear modernization perspective, that we find the bases for improving the lot of the numerical majority and creating a "national identity" and a common history. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, many of these changes do not require a radically democratic experiment, but a simple respect for the Maya as Guatemalan citizens. We have seen, though, that the Ladino forms of power and status are contingent on reinforcing this ethnic dichotomy, and not in generating a class dichotomy.

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[158] The anthropological and historical research on this issue is extremely conflictual. Some authors conclude that the power of the principales was destroyed in the late 1800s, some say it occurred under Ubico, while others point out that it disintegrated during the 1960s as religious traditions changed and economic conditions improved. In the case of the 1960s though, some principales supported positive change, some used their powers to advance their own ends, and some fought these changes. What is clear from this lack of consensus is that it depends on the specific community investigated, and that a number of internal and external variables play a role in determining the relative power of the principales. Hence, it seems a simplistic explanation for a much more complex set of ethnic and power relationships.

[159] Beatriz Manz, Refugees of a Hidden War. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988) p. 11.

The legacy of the "revolution" for the Maya, then, was not one of positive identification even though some communities benefited from the possibilities for land rental and some individuals received land through the reform program.[160] These marginal gains were mitigated by the hostile environment created by the Ladino landowners and the Catholic Church, and as a result, in many communities the Maya did not involve themselves in the local political scene leaving all control with the traditional Ladino figures. Further, religious and political animosities divided several Maya communities as the traditional leaders, Protestants, Catholics, and differing political factions vied for political control of the mayoralty position. It has been suggested in different ways that this "shaking up" of traditional structures was somehow beneficial as it gave a few Maya communities experience in modern party politics and a taste of "democratic politics." In commentaries by the Maya from some communities, there is little to suggest that they entered this arena as equals.[161] Throughout the ten - year period there was minimal faith expressed in the rhetoric of "equality" or that change would benefit the Maya. Interestingly, the Maya did not believe the "democratic opening" was going to last for any length of time. Those Maya that did participate and ran for or were elected as the local mayor had to be very cautious that the economic prerogatives of the local Ladino elite were not tampered with. Even though the election of several Maya mayors took place in this period, to the shock of rural Ladinos, it became an acceptable phenomenon in Ladino circles since this formal office provided no basis from which to alter the existing land or labor structure. Also, it was still clear that Maya mobilization and protest at the local level were going to be met with extreme repression. There is no doubt that the election of a Maya mayor held an important symbolic significance to the Maya but this occurred at the expense of dividing the community, destroying the consensual and virtue - based process under the previous informal structure, and in disappointing heightened expectations of community benefits. There was still no ability to confront Ladino elites on the issues of land or labor through the mayors seat as the central government was not going to permit such Maya tactics at the community level. The Ladinos still controlled all the political and economic forces in threatening, cajoling, harassing, and seeking retribution if necessary. Had these qualities been altered or modified to some extent, it could have left an indelible impression on the Maya conscience. As such, for the Maya the "revolution" left a legacy with few realized ideals to struggle for and few gains on which to build an alternative future.

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[160] Worried Ladino landowners rented land cheaply or even for free to create the impression that their lands were not idle or unproductive.

[161] See Ruben Reina, The Law of the Saints. (New York: Bobbs - Merrill, 1966). Kay Warren, The Symbolism of Subordination. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978). Douglas Brintnall (1979).

In June of 1954, President Arbenz resigned his position following the invasion by counter - revolutionary forces from Honduras, pressures from the U.S. embassy, and the unwillingness of Guatemala's military to combat a U.S. - backed military force. For the Ladinos the "ten years of spring" had brought numerous freedoms, changes in the economy, and political options. Although the reasons for the abrupt termination of this "liberal democratic" experiment, whether it was a greater fault of the U.S. or of the "revolutionaries" themselves, will be debated for decades to come, it is becoming increasingly recognized that a major and fundamental error was the failure of Ladino society to confront the bases of the Ladino - Maya distinction in Guatemala.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to establish a number of distinct theoretical and descriptive positions, which depart from the prevailing understanding of the Maya - Ladino dichotomy and political - economic events in Guatemala. These alternative positions and historical evidence have demonstrated that there is significant substance for discussing the relevance of the Maya - Ladino distinction in terms of a powerful and antagonistic ethnic relationship expressed at all levels of society. It is, then, not just a set of "cultural differences." Of strong import in this respect is the evidence which suggests that the present construction of "ethnic images" and social placement is not traceable back to the colonial era and implies an anachronistic set of relations that will quickly be erased by modernization or class conflict. These ethnic relationships exist in their present form due to an economic and ethnic transformation involving the expansion of the coffee industry in the late 19th century. Consequently, capitalist agro - export production deepened these ethnic differences rather than minimizing their social significance, creating a rigid ethnic differentiation that ended the possibilities for inter - ethnic and mutual co-existence based on pure "class" categories. History, from this point onward, could be written in terms of two separate ethnic experiences: one Maya and one Ladino.

As observed, the writing of Guatemalan history in this century has largely favored the Ladino experience and interpretation of events in relation to U.S. imperialism. Although the negative impact of the U.S. political and economic penetration of Guatemala cannot be denied or condoned, I have outlined how Guatemalan "nationalism" is based on rather spurious moral criteria and political - economic standards given the Ladino elites' previous preference for "foreign elites and ideas" and the character of Ladino - Maya relations. As noted, there was no "democratic" or "egalitarian" tradition defeated by U.S. capitalism and political intrigue. Certainly the U.S. did not foster or promote either tradition, but conversely, the Ladino elite and Ladino "revolutionaries" never represented these principles with respect to the Maya majority in the Ladino struggle against U.S. influence in the nation. This was the real character of Guatemalan "nationalism" as the 1944-54 democratic revolution took place, and I submit that it was also the "revolution's" main failing.

Most importantly, I have utilized this history to outline an alternate understanding of Maya - Ladino relations which focuses specifically on the character and forms of Ladino power relationships in the Maya highlands and how these affected the construction of Maya life. This was an effort to break with the traditional focus on the "Maya community," the "corporate community," and the "community - state" relationship, and I feel this will provide a better explanation as to how and why the Maya reacted in the manner they did in later decades. This was also an initial attempt to dispel the perceptions of either a "Maya autonomy" or a "community power" by suggesting that there are more tangible and concrete forces at work which have provided the Maya with a "space" for cultural continuity, e.g. geographical conditions, types of capitalist expansion. Without romanticizing or denigrating this "space," I have argued that there is a real precariousness underlying the cultural - economic condition of the Maya given their experience with the coffee industry and the prevailing structure of Ladino - Maya relations in the highlands. This "precariousness" will become more evident in the next chapters as I outline the determinants of what I call the "second phase of capitalist expansion." This began in the 1960s and is related to developments described in this chapter in that the state and foreign - domestic elites were able to overcome several of the constraints placed on "development" in the highlands.

In passing, it may be observed that very little has been said up to this point about the military. The main reason for this is that it was not until the middle of this century (1950s) that the military became a force "unto itself," developing and defining its role in Guatemalan society. As documented, the strongest repressive presence in the countryside up until the 1950s were the Ladino landowners, administrators and police. The military maintained its influence and presence largely in the Capital, and generally under the personal direction of a particular national figure (Cabrera, Ubico), reacting to protests (Patzicía) but not controlling or directing affairs as a semi- or fully autonomous institution vis - a - vis other sectors. This will become more apparent over the next chapters.

Chapter Three

Ladino Politics and Economy: the Rise of the Military (1944 - 1960)

The political history of Guatemala in this century has generally been understood from a revolutionary / counter - revolutionary perspective. As the 1944-54 decade of revolution was questionable in its revolutionary content, so too is the "counter - revolution" categorization in its assumptions concerning the post - 1954 period. The "counter - revolutionary" period is understood as characterized by the following features: a return to power of the Ladino landowning export oligarchy (coffee interests), strong repressive powers vested in the state, phases of extreme state violence when confronted with organization and protest by the "popular classes," the expanded presence of the military at the highest levels of government and in party politics, and the greater role of foreign (U.S.) capital in the economy. In this framework it is generally asserted that all the achievements of the "revolution," such as the supposed organization and political - economic gains of the "popular classes," were abrogated, virtually returning Guatemala to a pre-1944 political condition. It must be emphasized that this assessment did not follow from direct analysis of the Guatemalan political scene following the 1954 alteration in government from Colonel Jacobo Arbenz to Colonel Castillo Armas, but was derived from the rhetoric and analysis surrounding the emergence of the guerrilla movement and military repression of the late 1960s. It was under these conditions that the 1944-54 period took on a greater revolutionary significance, which is, however, a mistaken interpretation of the pre- and post- 1954 period. In this chapter I will advance the thesis that there was no direct U.S. dominance over Guatemala and that the nationalist middle class forces gradually reinstated many of the reforms that had been temporarily abrogated by the U.S. intervention in 1954. It is to a Guatemalan scholar I will turn for several of the theoretical and descriptive insights into this time period.

Several factors renewed a scholarly interest in Guatemala by the late 1960s, notably the emergence of the first guerrilla movements in the Ladino south - eastern region, high levels of state repression, and a violent political context. The evolving class - dependency perspective explained these phenomena with direct reference to the U.S. role in overthrowing the "popularly elected" Arbenz administration and initiating a "counter - revolutionary" regime reminiscent of the Ubico dictatorship in its defence of the landowning oligarchy. This critical left effort to defend the gains of the "revolutionary decade" rested on several different political and economic criteria as a basis from which to critique all later developments in Guatemalan society. A very important aspect of this critique was the effort to demonstrate an entrenched "revolutionary tradition" among the masses such that the small reactionary elite was compelled continually to repress them through state violence. The figure of Arbenz, and the Arbenz administration, became early symbols of the futility of electoral politics for achieving "revolutionary ends" within the American imperium. Nevertheless, the 1944 - 54 period in Guatemala was considered an important experience in radicalizing the "popular classes" to the advantage of the armed guerrilla struggles emerging during the mid-1960s. These "classes," it is assumed, remembered the "revolutionary gains" under Arbenz (fair elections, labor benefits, land reform) and the loss of these achievements under the Castillo Armas regime and later administrations. As was analyzed in the previous chapter, though, these advancements had little bearing on the conditions of the Maya majority. This leads to the question as to which populations were considered the "revolutionary popular classes" within this evolving critical perpsective if this category could not include the Maya majority.

To a high degree, this was largely a critical North American and Ladino understanding of what was a purely Ladino experience (mostly urban) and, as will be demonstrated, it led to an overestimation and extreme optimism regarding the possibilities for revolutionary change by revolutionaries and observers during the "counter - revolutionary" period. As an in - depth analysis of the post-1954 period will reveal, the revolutionary / counter - revolutionary dichotomy that became entrenched within the class - dependency perspective is a weak standard from which to explain and evaluate the later political and economic events in Guatemalan society after 1954. This assessment emerges partly from the exclusion of the Maya majority from any "revolutionary benefits" (as noted in the previous chapter) but also, and just as importantly, from a more critical understanding of the Ladino political forces active prior to and after 1954. If we first recognize that the "revolution" was a middle class "nationalist" reform movement (of a narrow ethnic and class composition) and not a "popular class" or popularly based revolution, then the continuity rather than the discontinuity is more apparent between the "revolutionary" and "counter - revolutionary" periods.[162] This also more thoroughly explains why the Guatemalan "revolution" was so quickly thwarted, with little internal resistance, during and after 1954.

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[162] The reference to a "popular revolution" in Guatemala is far more common in the scholarly discourse in North America than among contemporary Guatemalan scholars. The most renowned Guatemalan scholars have long recognized (over 25 years) the "revolutionary" limitations of this middle class movement and have critiqued it accordingly. This is not surprising since most of the mythology surrounding the 1944 - 54 period was easily usurped by the civilian - military governments of the 1960s and 1970s as they pursued their own development strategy. Why this was possible will become evident through the discussion that follows.

What was stressed in the previous chapter was the content of a peculiar Guatemalan "nationalism," a nationalism comprised of a non-Maya identity that sought to mitigate, control and compete against the monopolistic and predatory effects of U.S. capital in the country. It was certainly the arrogant character of U.S. imperialist power, and not the forms of production and Maya enslavement in the more nationally "autonomous" coffee industry, that infuriated and united the Ladino middle - class (rural Ladino landowners, teachers, professionals, sectors of the military, nascent industrial sector).[163] This was the real content of the 1944 - 54 revolutionary period, a revolution that lacked any "popular" qualities or participation from the rural majority and thus the Maya. Most importantly, the structure of Maya - Ladino power relations in the countryside remained largely unaltered throughout the "revolutionary" period despite the fact that the Maya, as the national majority, resided in the rural areas where agriculture remained the cornerstone of the country's economy. As the U.S. became increasingly preoccupied with the Guatemalan revolution and brought together allies from within the nation, the Arbenz administration rapidly capitulated in the face of this U.S. offensive and the small U.S. backed "liberation forces" led by Castillo Armas from bases in Honduras.

After the resignation of Arbenz and through the years of the Castillo Armas regime, little scholarly or media attention was directed towards analyzing the Guatemalan political scene and the changes that were occurring in the economy.[164] It was not until the mid- to late 1960s that there was a renewed interest in Guatemala, and adopted a more penetrating and critical "class - dependency" perspective in response to the extreme urban and rural violence of the period. Given the political climate in Guatemala, the success of the Cuban revolution, the U.S. attack on Vietnam, and the existence of revolutionary political parties and movements in several Latin American countries, ideological lines were quickly drawn between support for the "revolutionary masses" and criticism of "reactionary elites." In this perspective, which forcefully contrasted U.S. imperialism and reactionary domestic - military elites with the "revolutionary popular classes," virtually no attention was directed towards understanding how the Ladino - Maya composition of Guatemala mitigated or enhanced revolution by the "masses," what the numerous political parties in Guatemala represented, what the role of civilian political parties were in fomenting or restricting revolutionary change through the electoral arena, how industrialization and state directed development altered the class structure or regional interests, or how regional and urban - rural divisions had a direct bearing on revolutionary strategy and the possibilities for radical social change. The class - dependency perspective placed considerable import on the historical U.S. economic and military imperial role up to the 1970s (Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Cuba) without regard to the specific "national" characteristics that might either promote or reduce the possibilities for revolutionary activity. It was from within this political stance that the supposed "gains" of the 1944 - 54 period in Guatemala became established as incontrovertible proof of a "popular class" revolution, rather than as simply a "middle class" reformist movement. Thus what went unrecognized was the inherent "middle class" and "lower class" Ladino hostility towards permitting or promoting any real improvement in the livelihood of the Maya majority. As such, ethnic and regional divisions were not emphasized or analysed in - depth. The only relevant "contradiction" considered was the one between the U.S., its reactionary domestic allies, and the "popular classes." Since it was assumed that there was a high degree of homogeneity between the U.S.'s political and economic interests and those of the Guatemalan military and Guatemalan political - economic elites, the contraditions among these groups were largely ignored or understated. In addition, careful analyses of the composition of the "popular classes" and the guerrilla movements of the 1960s and 1970s were not generally undertaken, advancing instead a more "romanticized" version of guerrilla activity and the possibilities for revolutionary change.

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[163] From the press reports of the day it is clear that the urban Ladinos clearly understood their "revolution" against the dictatorship as a purely "middle class" undertaking and not a "popular" class revolution. In no sense was this "revolution" based on a Maya - Ladino unity or national project. See Richard Adams, "Ethnic Images and Strategies," in Guatemalan Indians and the State, 1540 - 1988. Carol Smith, ed. (1990).

[164] Partly this reflected the U.S. government's efforts to downplay its role in overthrowing the Arbenz government while portraying Armas as a hero in freeing Guatemala from a "communist" dictatorship. The major works in this period were sociological or cultural surveys drawing heavily on the census materials / community studies, rather than evaluating ongoing political - economic changes.

A Reexamination of the 1944 - 54 "Revolution"

A work by René Poitevin is helpful for disentangling the "revolutionary" myth from the reality of the 1944-54 period and evaluating important continuities between the "revolutionary" and "counter - revolutionary" periods.[165] Poitevin's analysis recognizes not only the economic continuity, but also the social and political continuity between these two periods. This continuity is best expressed in the author's use of the term "compromiso" (compromise) in examining the relationship between political and economic forces during the pre- and post- 1954 period. In addition, there is considerable evidence to support Poitevin's analysis of this period (early 1950s to early 1970s) and this will be introduced to deepen the theoretical framework that the author develops in explaining this time period.[166]

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[165] René Poitevin, El Proceso de Industrializacion En Guatemala. (Centroamérica: EDUCA, 1977).

Poitevin observes that 1944 marked the year in which the forces of the petite bourgeoisie (urban middle class) took hold of the state apparatus, occupying for the first time the highest positions of government. They then initiated an economic project that was "nationalistic" and less "dependent" on U.S. sources of capital. He notes that the international conjuncture, with the end of W.W.II, the start of the Cold War, and U.S. domination in Latin America, did not favor this form of independent development. The agrarian reform of 1952 served to unify not only the landowning oligarchy, U.S. corporate interests (UFCo), and the U.S. government, but also important sectors of the "middle class" that were very powerful at the time such as sectors of the military, new agro - export interests, and the bureaucracy. Thus in 1954 the petite bourgeoisie was not defeated and expelled with the "counter - revolution," but were an important part of the compromise reached among various forces in the government, state apparatus, political parties and the economy.

> In other words one must not lose sight, if one wants to analyse the period of the last thirty years in Guatemala, that this form in itself is a complex and contradictory unity at certain levels, in that clearly it is distinquished by two phases, that of 1944 until the American intervention of 1954, and from then until present. **During all this time the petite bourgeiosie has been the class that has remained as possessor of the State apparatus, and the bourgeoisie has remained solidly anchored in economic power, though without always possessing political power**, and finally, imperialism has played in all cases a determinant role.[167]

Poitevin's analysis is theoretically unique, and specifically for the period he is writing in (early 1970s), because he recognizes that there is not just one major contradiction (U.S. imperialism / reactionary Guatemalan elites versus "revolutionary masses") but numerous contradictions at all levels of society related to the diversification of the agro - export sector and the process of urban industrialization. Both processes were initiated between 1944 and 1954. The author points out that these economic changes had important social and political implications and that these were not determined solely by the exterior (U.S. imperialism) acting upon the interior (Guatemala). Rather, beginning with a certain degree of internal autonomy (the

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[166] Poitevin's theoretical framework draws on a combination of Marxist currents (dependency, imperialist, French structuralist) supported by U.S. studies from a modernization perspective, but the most obvious influence in his theory is the works of Nicos Poulantzas. Poitevin's work does not deal with the "Maya" or rural question and is restricted to a penetrating examination of the contradictions between and among different economic sectors and their relative political strengths.

[167] R. Poitevin, (1977) p. 147 - 148. (emphasis my own)

1944 - 54 period) economic changes were instituted that led to all forms of contradictions, not just between social classes but between fractions within the same social class. These affected the composition of the "bloc in power," the level of state penetration in society, and the dominant ideology in the post-1954 period.[168]

Poitevin's analysis begins with a critical examination of those "middle class" forces in power during the 1944 - 54 period, and it is with his critical insights that additional evidence will be integrated in this chapter, to demonstrate important continuities between the pre- and post-1954 eras. This is also the main reason why a brief reexamination of Ladino economic and political forces during the "revolutionary" period is in order. The important sectors of this "petite bourgeois" coalition between 1944 and 1954 that Poitevin examines were the state bureaucracy, the more specialized "technocrats," the new agro - export sectors and the military.

It was under Arévalo that the state bureaucracy both expanded significantly in personnel and functions, and took on a broader role in developing the economy of the country (generally referred to now as "national capitalist development"). State intervention in a number of areas was intended to play a more comprehensive and long - term role in the economy.

> The former is evident by the creation of state organs that would be called upon to fulfill the fuction of orientating the economy, thus in this epoch they created: the Production Development Institute, INFOP, a bank destined to finance the small industries and the medium sized agriculturists, i.e. dedicated to the creation of a medium business. They also created the Guatemalan Institute of Social Security, and gave autonomy to the Bank of Guatemala (central bank). They increased the number of ministries of State, and later they created a whole series of official organs such as the Department of National Agriculture that would be charged with the application of the agarian reform law.[169]

The origins of this much expanded bureaucracy lie partially in the bureaucratic expansion that took place partly under the Ubico dictatorship, but more from rural emigration, particularly from the economically depressed southeast region (Ladino - dominated region) to Guatemala City. Between 1944 and 1954 these rural Ladino immigrants were able to find lower - level employment opportunities within the rapidly expanding state bureaucracy. At a higher level within this bureaucracy was a nascent technocratic class who were to play a prominent role in the industrialization of the nation (more specifically the capital). They represented the more "progressive" wing of the middle class sectors, and later brought about the economic integration of Central America with the creation of the Central American Common Market in the late 1950s

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[168] Ibid., p.148.

[169] Ibid., p. 164.

/ early 1960s. The origins of this technocratic class and the powerful influence it would later exert within the country, Poitevin traces to the 1944 - 54 period.

> At the same time that they increased the apparatus of the state, also in the process of 1944 to 54, they awarded a singular importance to the University, from where, as will be remembered, there had emerged some of the principal leaders of the movement, and as is obvious they converted it into the principal center of ideological elaboration of the petite bourgeiosie. Given the previous, one of the first acts of the revolutionary government was to award administrative autonomy to the University and endow it with a tax that corresponded to one percent of the State budget. They carried out the reorganization of the whole institution, especially the faculty of Economy, founded in the final stages of the Ubico regime, but in fact structured during the governments of the revolution.[170]

As Poitevin adds, the backgrounds of these students show they were largely from middle class (Ladino) families with urban or rural commercial interests or other middle class sectors (professionals, teachers). As this interchange between the government and the university expanded between 1944 and 1954, this growing technocratic sector was to take advantage of post- graduate university training in the United States (especially within the field of economics) then returning "imbued" with the theories of an advanced capitalist system and a knowledge of "development" policy as defined by international organizations.[171]

A third sector that developed in this time period was a more economically diversifed and emergent agro - export and small - scale industrial class, whose incipient forms of production were protected and enhanced by government legislation, expanded / improved transportation facilities, and easier credit. This was most apparent in the expansion of the cotton growing industry where legislation protected domestic producers by requiring that local textile industries utilize a certain percentage of the domestic crop over foreign cotton. Also the state promoted the sale of cotton surpluses abroad and state credit was extended to cotton producers. Similar (though less obvious) arrangements were utilized to introduce and increase levels of production in cardomon, coffee, sugar cane, cattle, and crops for the production of vegetable oils. The combination of government endorsement, subsidies, and protective legislation for such sectors as cotton, sugar cane and cattle production served to bring into production the humid lowland (Ladino) south - west departments along the Pacific Coast. These were lands that were largely uninhabited and unutilized, but their proximity to the already developed transportation facilities of the coffee industry made possible the rapid development and exportat of these crops. This diversification broadened the agro - export base and expanded numerically the size of the agro -

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[170] Ibid., p. 167.

[171] Ibid., 167 - 168.

exporting class, while incorporating substantial areas of the Guatemalan lowlands into the agricultural production process. This emerging agro - export class was considered more "modern" and "progressive" compared to the Ladino coffee oligarchy, due to its technological applications in agriculture and its preference for high levels of state intervention in their sector of the economy.

Between this new agro - export sector and the established coffee oligarchy there were important divisions. Whereas the largest coffee interests (and to a lesser extent the old cattle interests) supported the improvement of transportation facilities, they were not supportive of legislation that limited their access to "imported goods" (to protect local producers), nor did they have any reason to embrace a "nationalist," "anti-U.S." ideology that threatened their ability to sell in U.S. markets. These were markets that had taken years to secure (in the switch from Europe to U.S. during the 1930s and 1940s) and had become extremely lucrative in the post-W.W. II era. In addition and most importantly, all Ladino coffee interests were in agreement on preventing any alteration of the existing land tenure structure and power relations in the rural countryside. As noted, the "land reform" legislation of Arbenz was not intended to ameliorate the immediate poverty or landlessness of the Maya population, but was an attempt to break down the existing "feudal" agrarian structure and force the modernization of the agro - export sector.

The "land reform" project was never intended to limit the seasonal labor practices imposed upon the Maya. Instead the reform legislation was an attempt to eliminate the large landowners' reliance on "mozos colonos" (colonized servants), this being the predominant "feudal" labor practice throughout the Ladino southwest, the lower highlands of the southwest, and in the departments of Alta and Baja Verapaz. The large landowners in Guatemala tended to have only about 10% to 15% of their total lands in cultivation or in use for production. The rest of their lands were unused, or more often underutilized. A large class of "mozos colonos" resided on these coffee or cattle estates exchanging labor for the use of a small plot of land.

This class of "colono" labor was largely made up of those Maya whose communities had been destroyed by the initial coffee expansion of the late 1800s and / or the debt bondage system or by the most unfortunate of rural Ladinos, (rarely and in extremely small numbers were Ladinos condemned to a life of seasonal labor employment and landlessness). This was the class of Maya considered to be the most "Ladinoized," since the historic destruction of their communities and total loss of their lands had ended the linguistic, cultural and ritual diversity that was still apparent in the north and central highlands, and among the Maya seasonal laborers. Again, wages were largely symbolic but simple access to a plot of land ensured that some degree of economic security was afforded to the "colonos" in this relationship. By the 1950s successive generations of "colonos" had lived and died on these coffee and cattle plantations as permanent laborers / subsistence producers. It is a evident that the large to medium - sized Ladino landowners and urban Ladinos generally viewed this class of "colonos" with the same contempt as the larger population of Maya seasonal labor, but the landowners felt more directly threatened by the organization and land ownership of the "colonos" under the land reform program than by urban union organization and the industrial / agro - export diversification promoted from within the capital.[172] Consequently, it was this side of the "feudal" equation that the established Ladino landowning oligarchy had no desire to see disrupted. It was this feudal "patron - mozo" (master - servant) relationship that the land reform program sought to alter by turning unused lands over to this class of existing subsistence producers (who had access to land in exchange for labor time but not ownership).

In contrast, the emergent cotton and sugar cane - producing class was considered more "modern" in their methods of production since they more fully utilized the lands they owned or rented, employed salaried or wage labor as a larger component of production than "land for labor," and were more technically and scientifically proficient in their production methods (use of fertilizers, pesticides). This sector more clearly identified with the protectionist and "nationalistic" line of development occurring under Arévalo and Arbenz. Nevertheless, they shared with the coffee oligarchy and other Ladinos the view that rural labor (whether permanent or seasonal) was there to be ruthlessly exploited and controlled for agro - export expansion and profits. This sentiment appears to have been equally shared by the political and bureaucratic figures promoting Guatemala's development at this time (and is also consistent with the review of Ladino attitudes and practices outlined in the previous chapter). Again, even with this more "progressive" agricultural sector becoming politically influential there was no incentive for them to disrupt the existing structure of power relations in the countryside, and up until 1952 neither Arévalo nor Arbenz had demonstrated any resolve to alter the existing "colono labor" or "seasonal labor" practices of the old or new agro - export sectors. In addition, it is in this supposedly more "progressive" and modernizing Ladino agro - export sector that we find an important and intricate relationship with the Ladino officer class of the Guatemalan military.

The 1944-54 period was critical for altering the traditional role of the military in Guatemalan society, augmenting its institutional cohesion and extending its political authority. The history of the Guatemalan military up until 1944 had demonstrated little in the way of building national prestige or offering a professional career. Even though the Escuela Politécnica had been established in 1873 under the Barrios administration, professionalization and officer training were limited to Barrios's term in office, during which time numerous battles had been pursued against neighboring states. After this brief phase, the military remained dominated by personalities from the ranks of the coffee oligarchy, out of which arose individually strong figures, i.e. Cabrera, Ubico, whose dictatorial rule was supported by those same coffee interests.

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[172] Under Arévalo, legislation for rural labor unionization had been drawn up in such a way that it only benefitted laborers on the state owned fincas and those working on the UFCo banana plantations.

> Still, during this period the armed forces retained its quality as instrument of the dominant sectors and, including its level of professionalization and technical preparation, it tended to decline after the initial phases. Under the despotic regime of the lawyer Estrada Cabrera the soldiers dressed in rags and often begged for food, (this government privileged the development of the police as an instrument of control), while the corrupt generals enriched themselves.
>
> In the collective memory of the armed forces, the 70 years of liberalism are ignored with exception ot the first phase. Thus, Justo Rufino Barrios and the cadet Adolfo V. Hall, killed in a war against El Salvador, are venerated as national heroes. The period of the reform, idealized and analyzed in a subjective form, without inclusion of its tyrannical characteristics, is presented as the national epic poem.[173]

The military itself retained a heightened presence in the capital while maintaining poorly staffed outposts in the rural countryside, and despite being the largest military institution in the isthmus, it was ill - trained by the "top - heavy" core of "old generals."[174] It was actually under Ubico that some degree of professionalization and prestige was returned to officer training through the Escuela Politécnica, but the nature of this personalized dictatorship served to engender discontent among junior officers as positions and promotions were contingent on currying favor with Ubico.

When Ubico simply resigned in the face of civilian protests in the capital, the eventual overthrow of his hand - picked successor, General Ponce, became dependent on a revolt by the younger ranks of the officer class. These officers (Ladino) identified more closely with the civilian middle class aspirations expressed in the protests of the capital than with the corrupt and incompetent class of "old generals." The role played by younger officers in bringing down General Ponce brought the military into the forefront of all later events during the 1944-54 period, and secured the military as the major power broker amongst competing political forces in Guatemalan society from 1944 up to the present. The military, as an institution, entered the "revolutionary decade" with unparalleled popular urban support, untarnished by the legacy of brutal dictatorship. As noted in the previous chapter, the military was decisive in installing the Ladino middle class in power for the first time in the nation's history and it was with this class that the military established an intimate connection, and not with such sectors as the Ladino working class, the Maya majority, or the traditional Ladino coffee oligarchy.

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[173] Gabriel Aquilera Peralta, "Cuestión Etnica y Estado Militar en Guatemala," Boletín de antropología americana, No. 4 (diciembre, 1981) p. 144 - 45.
[174] See Piero Gleijeses, (1991) p. 14.

It is often suggested that a traditional military institution is incompatible with a truly revolutionary agenda, and this remains true in the case of Guatemala if it is remembered that the "revolution" of 1944 was brought about by a small group of urban civilians with no rural participants (the rural population making up some 80% of the population). Despite the rhetoric, the goals of the 1944 "revolution" were not radical in content (as in envisioning the total reorganization of society), nor did they include the rural, lower Ladino classes or Maya participation. Consequently, it was never a concern among this Ladino middle class "nationalist" movement that a reorganization of the military was necessary and given the role of junior officers in overthrowing General Ponce, it was not a priority that the military should be more tightly controlled under a civilian administration. In fact, the reverse occurred; the military emerged as the defenders of this middle class nationalist movement and as a result, the military's role in politics became expanded and necessary to securing those social and economic changes envisioned by the Ladino urban middle class. Nevertheless, once the military had made the move to support this sector, the inherent numerical weakness of the urban civilian movement would have prevented any attempts to strictly define and enforce civilian and military spheres of influence by the civilians alone.[175] The military became the force from which the extent of all later changes were to be determined. As observed in the previous chapter, the military's prestige was only further enhanced among Ladinos (rural and urban) with its rapid and unmerciless assault against the Maya revolt at Patzicía just prior to the election of Juan José Arévalo as president.

Compared to the petty and paranoid politics within the military under Ubico, following the overthrow of General Ponce the political role of the officer class expanded dramatically. Quickly the military became the sector from the middle classes that was to dominate national political structures. Rather than greater civilian control being extended over the military, the latter was granted, both constitutionally and in practice, greater autonomy. This heightened "autonomy" was expressed most clearly by the separate positions of "Jefatura de las Fuerzas

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[175] As noted in the previous chapter, without this military support the urban middle class never could have overthrown General Ponce at this time without entering into a protracted struggle involving the rural population. Such a scenario seemed unlikely given the make up of the urban middle class and its disdain for the rural population.

Armadas" (Commander of the Armed Forces) and the Minister of Defence, both powerful positions that could only be reconciled by allowing the military command to choose the military figures for each post.

> It is evident that through the two previous organs not only was there established a clear military autonomy in internal matters, except what is more important, situating itself as an autonomous institution with an enormous political inheritance in relation to all the State activities .... by charging the military to be the guardian of the legality of the nation and of being the guarantor of the "democracy," even in proposing what this is, it was able to offer itself, by situating itself as a body supposedly coherent and armed, in the role of arbitrator and interpretor of all the politics of the nation.[176]

As Poitevin observes, this clearly established full military control over all of its own affairs, but over the civilian political sphere as well. What was then initiated at this time was a continual power struggle between progressive military - civilian figures and conservative military officers over the direction and extent of "democratic" change.

Why did the military acquire such heightened importance in Guatemalan society in this period? The reasons lie in the inherent weakness of the civilian Ladino "middle - class" forces that initially contested the Ubico dictatorship and General Ponce, a middle class that had no rural support, very little oligarchic support, and on its own could not have effected any major changes without support from within the ranks of the military. Consequently, the military was granted full authority in protecting and preserving the expansion of "democratic rights" and the economic modernization promoted by the Ladino middle class. Given this constellation of forces, progressive civilian forces were from the beginning forced into a compromising position vis - a - vis the military, the latter having the ability to define the limits of any economic, social or political changes advanced by civilians. Thus an understanding of the military's political - ideological position at this time is crucial to understanding not only the 1944-54 period, but the post - 1954 period when the military supposedly "then" became more prominent.

In 1944 the military itself was clearly divided between those officers who supported a traditional conservative structure of autocratic power and those officers supportive of progressive liberal democratic institutions. The conservatives' agenda would not alienate either the coffee oligarchy or U.S. economic interests, whereas the progressive wing was more "nationalistic" in favoring an independent economic and political course of change. The former tended to be those officers who had been promoted within the ranks of the military under Ubico without benefit of training and education through the Escuela Politécnica (line officers). The younger and more professional officers who had graduated from the Escuela Politécnica tended to have middle class backgrounds and were supportive of a limited democratic opening and economic development, reflecting the aspirations of their civilian class counterparts. Between these two groups political animosities were rampant and conflictual, and clearly represented by the respective military figures of Colonel Francisco Arana (Commander of the Armed Forces) and Colonel Jacobo Arbenz (Minister of Defence) during the presidency of Arévalo. Under the Arévalo presidency military unity and Arévalo's own ability to govern were preserved by initially attempting to play these two competing forces within the military against each other. Arévalo's term in office was wracked by successive attempts to overthrow him by conservative military sectors, attempts that were preempted by the more progressive sectors. This particular military division was finally resolved late in Arévalo's term by the assassination of Colonel Arana by a small group of progressive officers in the military, thus clearing the path for Colonel Arbenz's election as president in 1950 with the full support of the military.[177]

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[176] R. Poitevin, p. 156 - 157.

Most importantly, first under Arévalo and then under Arbenz, military personnel began to be the beneficiaries of an unprecedented level of social and economic advantages and opportunities. Basically, the military's allegiance, or at least its non-interference, had to be bought in order to minimize the risk of a larger military revolt / conspiracy developing against the civilian electoral party system.

> As had been true since the fall of Ponce, the officers' salaries increased far more rapidly than those of civil servants and blue collar workers. Arbenz expanded the commissaries established by Arévalo, where officers could buy imported goods at reduced prices. Predictably, many officers purchased more than they needed and sold the surplus at a profit. Generous travel allowances and lucrative positions in the bureaucracy - all the governors of the country's twenty-two departments were colonels - helped to boost the morale of the officer corps. Attentive to the officers' needs, the Arbenz administration also began to build houses for them in preferred districts of the capital.[178]

It is through these economic advantages that most military officials became intimately connected and identified with the more progressive and independent economic initiatives undertaken by Arévalo and Arbenz, e.g. state - constructed infrastructure that competed with U.S. monopolies. Nevertheless, there was nothing "revolutionary" about the attitudes of the military officer class. They shared, with the major political parties (which supported and brought to power both

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[177] Piero Gliejeses provides the best account of this period and how the handling of the death of Arana severely tarnished the "democratic" credentials of Arévalo and progressive civilians. It also represented a serious blow to the oligarchy and the U.S. who had looked to Arana as a figure capable of maintaining a "moderate" course (no radical reforms with friendly U.S. relations) and of becoming the next president.

[178] P. Gleijeses, (1991) p. 201.

Arévalo and Arbenz), the bureaucracy, and urban professional classes, a contempt for anything that hinted of "communism" and a similar disdain for the rural Ladinos (mozos) and Maya, and thus a hostility towards deeper societal change.

The election of Arbenz to president in 1950 served to mollify the military, Arbenz being a highly respected officer among the "modernizing" military sectors who were then firmly in command following the death of Major Arana. As Arbenz gradually centralized his authority, marginalizing the political parties of the Congress in favor of a small group of "communist" advisors (from the Guatemalan Workers' Party), the military lamented Arbenz's political conversion but refrained from intervening. As previously noted, Arbenz's "radical" economic reforms did not deviate in the least from standard liberal economic theory, but the U.S. press / UFCo was particularly vehement in suggesting a "communist take-over" in progress. When Arbenz launched his agrarian reform program against vocal oppostion from the landowning oligarchy, the Catholic Church, and the Congress, and when the land reform laws (Decree 900) were temporarily suspended as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, the military remained passive even as Arbenz simply replaced the magistrates of the Supreme Court with land reform supporters in order to have the program proceed.[179] What accounts for this passivity within the military was not any sympathy or direct support for a "revolutionary agenda" or for the specific land reform project, but a specific *modus vivendi* reached between President Arbenz and the military.

> Economic rewards alone could not assure the army's loyalty. There were two further conditions, never openly stated but understood by all: the army had to retain the monopoly of weapons and it could not be the target of subversive infiltration -- let the communists proselytize among the civilians, if such was the president's will; the military must remain inviolate.[180]

This "neutral" stance by the military somewhat baffled and concerned the U.S. embassy and other civilian sectors (notably the Catholic Church and the oligarchy) since any attempt to overthrow Arbenz was contingent on knowing who the military would defend.

This military "neutrality" can be best understood within the context of the upcoming presidential race that would have taken place between 1954 and 1956, leaving little opportunity for the land reform to be successfully concluded. Given the belated attempt at the land reform project within Arbenz's own tenure (1953), specific figures from the military's officer class were already gearing up to replace Arbenz in the next election. The evidence suggests that such an individual would then have limited the extent of any ongoing land reform initiatives and lower class Ladino rural organization, and in turn diminished the antagonism with the United States.[181] What the military understood, and what most "anti-Arbenz" American and Guatemalan sectors failed to, was that there was little chance for substantial societal change as long as the military retained full autonomy over its training and promotions, and held a complete monopoly on all the weaponry within the country. Moreover, the "radical" advisors close to Arbenz realized that the best they could hope for after the next election was that the incoming president did not banish them from the country.[182] In effect, had the U.S. followed its own findings, all of which pointed out that there were no "communist" influences in the military, and supported those military officers aspiring to presidential office, there would have been no reason (even from within the dominant Cold War thinking of the day) to intervene and force the resignation of Arbenz.[183] For whatever reasons the Eisenhower administration forfeited its own insights and decided to overthrow, what had become, to the American press, a Soviet - directed "red threat" emanating from Guatemala.

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[179] The Supreme Court had declared Decree 900's exclusion of judicial review as unconstitutional. Ibid., p. 155.

[180] Ibid., p. 202.

Colonel Castillo Armas was neither the first choice nor necessarily the best candidate to undertake the task of overthrowing the Arbenz government. As most scholars concede, Castillo Armas would not have even reached the pages of history had it not been for the U.S. necessity of having a Guatemalan national lead the covert expedition. Castillo Armas' only claim to fame was that he had been quickly defeated in attempting to lead a military revolt against Arbenz, escaped from jail afterwards, and then later attempted to lead a small group of exiles from Honduras into Guatemala, who were again rapidly crushed and sent fleeing. Although the military's officers were not comfortable with Arbenz's agenda, the majority disliked Castillo Armas even more.[184] In addition and despite the extremely vocal position of the anti-Arbenz opposition in Guatemala, it had no organizational unity and posed no real threat given its lack of support among the officer class of the military. Lacking any organized internal support, Castillo Armas' only virtue was that he was fully pliant to U.S. demands regarding future policies in Guatemala. He was only necessary as a figurehead for a small liberation force, a force that was in no sense capable of confronting the Guatemalan military.

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[181] P. Gleijeses is the only person who has investigated this aspect of Guatemalan politics, observing that there were some 12 presidential hopefuls, none of whom were openly supportive of Arbenz's agrarian reforms and the persistent antagonism with the U.S.

[182] "The PGT looked uneasily at the crowded field of presidential candidates. The most they could hope, they concluded, was that Arbenz's successor would not be actively hostile to the party." P. Gleijeses, (1991) p. 206.

[183] In U.S. embassy reports of the day it was acknowledged that the military was not infiltrated by subversives and to the surprise of the U.S. the most important officers were always cordial, grateful to the U.S. for the assistance they had received and openly "pro-U.S." By late 1953, U.S. policy appears to be driven more by their own rhetoric and press hysteria than by their own assessments of Guatemala.

[184] Impressions drawn from P. Gleijeses, (1991) p. 342 - 360.

The real effect the U.S. intended was to force the hand of the military with the threat of a full - scale U.S. military intervention. Certainly the international climate of hostility that preceded the eventual Castillo Armas invasion in June of 1954, in which the U.S. coerced a condemnation of the Arbenz administration through the Organization of American States and then refused a United Nations hearing of Guatemala's case in the face of Castillo Armas' invasion, created an atmosphere of total international isolation. With this continual and increasing U.S. hostility, the military feared that a U.S. invasion would ultimately lead to the complete destruction and dismantling of the existing military institution. By June of 1954 the conflict was clearly delineated between the Guatemalan military and the U.S. embassy, the U.S. awaiting the military's response to this direct U.S. provocation as Castillo Armas' liberation force crossed into Guatemala from Honduras and U.S. bombers strafed the capital. In this political climate, and despite the minimal capabilities of Castillo Armas' liberation forces, the military adopted a conciliatory position and attempted to negotiate the terms of Arbenz's resignation and an eventual successor. This occurred directly between the Guatemalan military and the U.S. embassy, and not with Castillo Armas's "liberation army." By July of 1954, Castillo Armas had been installed as president of Guatemala at the behest of the U.S.

It has often been argued that the Guatemalan military single - handedly "sold out" the "revolution" by capitulating to U.S. pressure, negotiating with the invaders, and allowing the conservative oligarchy, via Castillo Armas, to reassume power in July of 1954. In this view the military betrayed not just the supposed "revolutionary" aspirations of the masses, but even its core mandate to defend the national territory from a foreign - backed incursion. For later guerrilla movements the role of the Guatemalan military was singled out as an example of the limits to revolutionary change by way of an elected majority, and it became axiomatic that the complete destruction of the existing military forces was a necessary precondition to substantial social and economic reorganization by a revolutionary movement. Although this was an important position that was to later divide the political left both inside and outside of Guatemala over strategy, it does not adequately address the nature of the Guatemalan "revolution" in the first place, i.e. "middle class and nationalist," and fails to appreciate the limited civilian participation throughout the ten - year period.

By early 1953, when the land reform program was initiated, U.S. criticism and Cold War hysteria was reaching a fever pitch, especially as it became apparent the UFCo lands were the largest single target of the land reform. In this increasingly acrimonious atmosphere, the newly emergent and important sectors who had benefitted the most from the reformist decade (cotton, sugar cane, small industrial class, bureaucracy, military, political parties), became either critical of Arbenz or adopted a "neutral" stance. In general the urban middle class that had brought Arévalo and Arbenz to power was becoming leery of the direction of reforms, such as the increasing organization and ability to strike of the urban working class and the rural organizing that accompanied the land reform program. Poitevin cites an important source from within the government of the time who had analyzed the prevailing divisions, observing that the "bureaucratic bourgeoisie" had allied itself more closely with the traditional oligarchy after they had "transformed themselves into producers of coffee, breeders of cattle, cultivators of cotton, exploiters of mines and forests, manufacturers of textiles and of liquors, exporters of grains, etc."[185] With the passage of the Labor Code and social security obligations, these sectors were "converted into conspirators," and then "abandoned the struggle, when the law of Agrarian Reform was promulgated."[186]

> And it is much clearer when he (Jaime Díaz Rozzotto) tells us 'after the promulgacion of the Labor Code, the composition of classes of the Arevalo government revealed a petite bourgeois and a bureaucratic bourgeois predominance. In the military appeared the new bourgeoisie of cotton, with its petite bourgeoisie as sub-altern officials. Contrary to applying the Agrarian Reform, the new cultivators of coffee and of sugar cane, like the breeders of cattle, all born in the shade (protection) of the revolution, moved away from the government and from the Revolution . The structure of government made itself more bourgeois still. We petite bourgeois that formed part of the government took two different orientations: one, majority. openly pro - bourgeoisie, the other minority, loyal to their alliance with the working class. But the direction of the bureaucratic and military apparatus was in the hands of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, of the leaders of business, and the bourgeoisie of cotton.[187]

This insight is telling in that it demonstrates the minimal "official" support from within the Arbenz administration for "too radical" a development stance, in which only a small minority, i.e. Arbenz and his close advisors, were determined to institute broad rural and urban reforms. What had evolved was an administration that initiated reforms from the very top with very limited and committed political support from below. In contrast, though, no enthusiasm or endorsement had emerged from these "neutral" sectors for the U.S. - backed liberation forces of Castillo Armas. The middle - class position at this time was to lament the depth of the reforms in progress and the hostility of the U.S. without supporting either direct U.S. intervention or a more radical stance towards U.S. tactics, e.g. arming the population against a U.S. attack.

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[185] R. Poitevin, (1977) p. 170 - 171.

[186] Ibid., p. 171.

[187] R. Poitevin, (1977) p. 171. Quotes from Jaime Díaz Rozzotto, La Revolution au Guatemala, 1944 - 1954. (Paris: Editions sociales, 1971) p. 146 + 197.

Perhaps no figure in Guatemala better expressed this middle - class "nationalistic," "anti - communist," modernizing ideology than Clemente Marroquín Rojas, publisher / editorial writer of a major newspaper and always politically "front and center." Marroquín Rojas blended and adhered to a political position that was later considered to be contradictory by the "class - dependency" perspective and thus he was characterized as a "maverick" and an "enigma" by the political left. On the one hand he wholly endorsed the "anti - U.S." nationalism and the historical interpretation that supported the view that the U.S. had played a major role in perpetuating Guatemala's "backward" status (dependency thesis), and on the other hand he denounced the "communist" agenda and the idea that the "workers" or the lower classes should be the dominant political force in the country. What underlay this position was his determined faith in the ability of Guatemala to develop itself economically to a first world standard, and this could only be achieved by ensuring that the continued capitalist expansion and diversification of the economy remained under the control of Guatemalans. He observed that no one was opposed to the workers wanting to improve their conditions, but this "ideal" could only be achieved to the extent that production was not interrupted by the workers (public or private) being politically organized to the point of disrupting the economic process. Consequently, he favored the "nationalism" of the Arévalo and Arbenz governments, but ultimately felt that their endorsement of the working class against domestic and foreign capitalists was a "politics" that was detrimental to the goal of improving the lives of Guatemalan citizens. It was this nationalistic "middle - class" vision that best expressed the sentiments and limitations of the dominant Ladino classes of the "Revolution."[188]

When Arbenz resigned and the military openly pursued negotiations with the U.S. embassy, the military remained adamant in its opposition to Castillo Armas becoming president. An extremely threatening posture by the U.S. was necessary to force the military to accept the conditions of the U.S., to allow the representatives of the liberation forces to enter the capital, and to bring Castillo Armas to power. The veiled threat of greater U.S. intervention and retalitory action ensured this outcome. As Poitevin concludes, "[T]he old oligarchy that opposed the agrarian reform had triumphed, because it had two very important allies, on the internal plane the new bourgeoisie and the class fractions in possession of the State apparatus, and the support on the international plane, the intervention of the imperialism that constituted part already of an intimate form of the process."[189]

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[188] On Marroquín Rojas in this period see Carlos Samayoa Chinchilla, El Quetzal No Es Rojo. (Mexico, Arana Hermanos, 1956) p. 179 - 182. I mention Marroquín Rojas here as he will be noted as an important figure in the post - 1954 period; his inflexible nationalist position was to get him expelled from the next three elected goverments even though his popular nationalistic stances were what brought him into each of these governments.

The coalition that Poitevin refers to, and that was to prevail after June of 1954, was extremely unstable and contradictory in its makeup. If we take the evidence from the previous chapter on the Maya's marginalization during this ten year period and combine it with this critical overview of the Ladino class character of the Arévalo and Arbenz governments, we see that there is little to support the view that the military on its own betrayed the "revolution." Arbenz had simply attempted reforms that were well beyond the aspirations of the specific class that led and dominated this ten year period, namely the urban Ladino middle class and the military. In this respect the military completely fulfilled its assigned political role, defending those sectors who had benefitted most from the "revolution": the military itself, a new agro - export class, small industry, state bureaucracy, urban political parties, professionals. In addition, the military had attempted to negotiate a truce with the U.S. that would ensure the continuation of these governmental and economic sectors and the gains they had achieved between 1944-54. Only the recalcitrant attitude of the U.S. impeded this outcome, but as will be shown, this was but a temporary condition.

The tendency among "class - dependency" observers is to posit that a "natural" connection between the military and the landowning oligarchy was fully restored in 1954 when in fact the actual constellation of forces was far more complex and contradictory than a simple causal relationship being reestablished between the military and Castillo Armas / the oligarchy. As observed, there is little evidence to suggest that the military betrayed its Ladino middle - class allies, and consequently this is what undoubtedly differentiates the Guatemalan experience (without having to address the ethnic issue) from the case of El Salvador. In the 1930s the Salvadorean military became intimately tied to the fortunes of the landowning coffee oligarchy. In Guatemala the 1944-54 period put in motion a combination of agricultural and industrial diversification based on small and medium - sized Ladino producers, and the political freedoms of the decade had permitted an early and open denigration of oligarchic production methods by urban Ladinos. As a result, in Guatemala there took place a process of agro - export and industrial diversification that was, though belated relative to most of South America, some two decades prior to the rest of Central America. It is to these medium - sized Ladino producers (rural and urban) and the state bureaucracy that the fortunes of the Guatemalan officer class were more closely tied, in many instances as producers themselves in the new sectors developed between 1944 and 54 or as officials in the bureaucracy.

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[189] R. Poitevin, (1977) p. 172. Poitevin's reference to the U.S. as already an "intimate" part of the process during the revolution refers, I believe, to the markets in which the cotton, sugar cane, cattle and coffee were sold and also where the more modern methods production i.e. fertilizers, insecticides, scientific expertise, came from.

As Poitevin highlights, the legacy of the 1944-54 period is a curious mixture of contradictions between the various Ladino economic and political classes, of which the most important in the end was the U.S. position to intervene directly in the national affairs of Guatemala against a perceived "communist threat." Clearly this threat was minimal and non-existent among the most powerful institutions, i.e. the military, the largest political parties, the bureaucracy. The real threat to the U.S. stemmed from the "nationalistic" and independent development course advanced by the Ladino middle class. This program placed significant restrictions on the behavior of American companies and American capital, fostering an alternative development model that openly competed with the well - established U.S. perogatives in Central America. The treatment that UFCo received under Arévalo and then Arbenz was only one facet of a larger U.S. concern with "nationalistic and independent" development, and not simply "revolutionary" alternatives. In the case of Guatemala there is no evidence to suggest that there was a "revolutionary conscience" among the "popular classes" or that the land reform program constituted an entrenched "revolutionary" benchmark. The Ladino middle class was increasingly uncomfortable and insecure with the growing U.S. hostility towards Guatemala under Arbenz and it was highly likely that it would have reversed this trend through the electoral process. As such, the military's decision to negotiate reflected a shared middle - class "neutrality" in the face of the U.S. position against Arbenz and his few "communist" supporters. The forced imposition of Castillo Armas only fostered a greater anti-U.S. sentiment while pleasing the small oligarchic class. Although these powerful middle - class sectors were not ardent supporters of Arbenz, they still considered this a "national issue" to be resolved by Guatemalans and not by the U.S. As a consequence, the installation of Castillo Armas by the U.S. created an extreme contradiciton between those ascendent middle - class forces who then lacked representation but occupied the major institutions, and a president (Castillo Armas) whose only known support came from a small and discredited oligarchic class, backed by the continuous threat of greater U.S. intervention. How this contradiction within the Ladino politcal - economic sphere was worked out will be the central focus of the remainder of this chapter.

It is almost a universally held view among observers that Guatemalan history would be considerably different and better had not the U.S. intervened to remove Arbenz from office.

Only a handful of observers (Guatemalan scholars, e.g. R. Poitevin) have questioned the supposed "revolutionary" mythology and achievements surrounding this period, suggesting that this was a limited "liberal - democratic" opening, more "nationalistic" than radical in content. All of these observers fail to consider what degree of influence the "revolution" had for the Maya majority. Among foreign scholars, the tendency has been to characterize this period as an era of broad - based popular organization and political activity. Although this "revolutionary myth" has been useful for criticizing U.S. imperial behaviour in the isthmus, it is of minimal utility in understanding the types of political and social conflict that took place in the post-1954 period. The main reasons for this are that it neglects the complex "class" structure that emerged within the ethnic configuration of the 1944-54 period, assumes there was overwhelming support for Arbenz's agenda, and then suggests that a small oligarchic class has been kept in power through extreme violence ever since 1954. This characterization arose during the late 1960s through the class - dependency perspective and in response to Third World revolutionary activity in this period. What was and still is little understood are the political and economic changes that occurred in the post-1954 period up to the early 1960s. An analysis of these changes provides considerable insight into the supposed "popular" content of the "revolutionary period," and reinforces the necessity for an assessment based on ethnic and regional considerations. It also requires us to acknowledge that the "revolutionary" decade was not characterized by just positive change. In fact, as will be demonstrated, the most powerful and ruthless social classes of the post-1954 period were actually created and augmented between 1944 and 1954, notably the military, the new agro - export elite, the bureaucracy, and specific industrial - commercial interests.

From Castillo Armas to Ydígoras: Limits of the "Counter-Revolutionary" Thesis

On July 8, 1954, Castillo Armas became the head of a three - man junta that was to temporarily rule Guatemala. His presidency was later ratified by way of a plebiscite in which it was claimed that Castillo Armas received over 99% support. This was achieved through an extremely restricted suffrage and with no presidential alternative placed on the ballot. It was political tactics such as these and his assault on "Communist" organizations, tactics that were neither condemned nor prevented by the United States, which were later to become incontrovertible proof of the return to a pre-1944 dictatorial tradition and the reemergence of a "counter - revolutionary" project based on the ideology of "anti-communism." The Castillo Armas regime has been characterized as "authoritarian," "dictatorial," and a "strongman regime" (personalistic dictatorship) suggesting that Castillo Armas was able single - handedly to wield power in pressing forward a "counter - revolutionary" agenda and thus reversing the economic, social and political gains achieved under Arevalo and Arbenz (notably the land reform program). Having no visible popular support, yet capable of reversing the land reform program and disbanding the agrarian committees, it is argued that repression (thus establishing the repressive tradition) was his main tool for achieving these ends. Moreover, this agenda is said to express only the narrow interests of the small oligarchic class and U.S. corporations. Herein lies the basis for the "revolutionary / counter - revolutionary" dichotomy.[190]

As this section will demonstrate, the contemporary view that Castillo Armas was politically capable of reversing the changes initiated under Arévalo and Arbenz is patently untrue and stems from a characterization of the 1944-54 period as both "popular" and "revolutionary," attributing to Arbenz a level of national support for a radical agenda that he did not enjoy. In addition, it has been argued that by the late 1950s / early 1960s, the counter - revolutionary "liberationist forces" of Castillo Armas had been gradually integrated into commanding levels of the bureaucracy and the military, thus becoming the dominant figures in establishing and perpetuating the "counter - revolutionary" tradition that prevails up to the present. As will further be demonstrated, there is no evidence to support this claim. Again, this rests on a mythification concerning the "revolutionary" qualities of the 1944-54 period and what in particular Castillo Armas "reversed" after 1954, leading as well to a misunderstanding of the post-1954 period. Further, it suggests that there was / is a coherent "counter - revolutionary" project to be inaugurated and that there was a unified political force powerful enough to implement such a project i.e. the landowning oligarchy and "liberationist forces." It will be demonstrated that there is no evidence to support such an interpretation and that the available evidence convincingly supports an opposing argument, namely that the counter - revolutionary "liberationist" forces of Castillo Armas tenuously held power until 1957 but never replaced the more nationalistic middle - class urban elements. If there ever was a coherent "counter - revolutionary" project, it was not established while Castillo Armas was in power and was thoroughly repudiated with the election of Ydígoras Fuentes.

The post - 1954 period is not about a "strong man" and repressive dictatorial tradition being reinstated. What is most apparent from a review of this period is the extent to which those Ladino middle - class economic and social projects initiated between 1944-54 were continued and further enhanced. Consequently, the post - 1954 period reveals more clearly the limited

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[190] See the works of Susanne Jonas (1991), Jim Handy (1984), Susan Berger (1992), Eduardo Galeano (1969), and NACLA (1974).

"revolutionary" character and depth of the 1944-54 period rather than a ringing defence of "revolutionary gains," particularly when the ethnic dimension (Maya majority) is factored into this analysis. In examining the specific Castillo Armas regime what is most evident is that this was not a regime potent enough to erect either an agenda desired exclusively by the landowning oligarchy or by foreign economic interests, i.e. UFCo, as had characterized the dictatorial tradition between 1871 and 1944. Moreover it is not readily apparent that Castillo Armas was personally a spokesperson or representative of these narrow interests. What is more evident is the extreme "weakness" of his leadership position, his numerous attempts to broaden his support and appease urban Ladino sectors, and the persistent threat to his presidency that came from the political right and not from an organized and potentially powerful left coalition.

The assumption that Castillo Armas was a powerful and dictatorial figure with an "agenda" and the ability to reverse the "revolution," stems largely from his successful termination of the agrarian reform program, the disbanding of the rural agrarian committees, and the subsequent return of expropriated lands to their former owners. This all occurred without noticable opposition. This does not necessarily reflect the repressive strength of the Castillo Armas regime, but was an expression of the negligible "revolutionary" support (as documented) for Arbenz's land reform initiative, regardless of whether it was and is considered by observers to have been a "necessary" or "positive" measure for Guatemalan development. As will be argued, the manner in which Castillo Armas ended the Arbenz land reform program provides us with better insights into who had received land, what the land reform was intended to achieve, and whether or not a radical reorganization of rural Guatemala was ever intended. Furthermore, the combination of Castillo Armas' weak governing position and the fact that he was not confronted by an organized and "popular" opposition either rural or urban (specifically in the case of abrogating the land reform) raises the question to what extent there was a "revolutionary" tradition or an engrained "revolutionary experience," i.e. a "revolutionary conscience" among the masses to build upon in later years (post - 1954). As will be demonstrated, there is little evidence of such a pedagogical experience having taken place between 1944 and 1954. The post - 1954 period is not about a "counter - revolutionary" agenda or project being ruthlessly established by a small oligarchic class with the assistance of the military and the U.S. Rather it is a continuing and complex struggle between and among various Ladino classes / class factions that emerged between 1944 and 1954 and the older established coffee oligarchy. This view encompasses René Poitevin's understanding of "compromise."

What is not in dispute are the claims that the Castillo Armas regime was anti-democratic, that he ended the Arbenz land reform program, and that under his regime both union and political activity were severely restricted. There is also no question that a degree of retributive repression took place in both the rural areas and urban centers during the first months of the Castillo Armas regime. What is in dispute is the extent to which there actually was a "counter - revolutionary" agenda / project directed by the landowning / industrial oligarchy and the U.S. to restructure the economy and the political sphere, thus initiating a deep and perpetual conflict against the "national - popular will" of the time, a "will" that had been better "represented" by the Arbenz government. Between the time that Arbenz resigned and Castillo Armas became head of the "Junta" in power, some 1000 leaders and organizers of the variously defined "Communist" organizations (intellectuals, artists, writers, students, teachers, sectors of the press, several union and political leaders) had sought asylum within numerous embassies, and 17,000 more were temporarily jailed after Castillo Armas assumed power, of which a small percentage were tortured and killed (all military personnel were exempt from the threat of retribution).[191] During this period there was no active resistance or protest by those who had been organized into urban / rural unions, rural committees, or joined political parties under the former government. On the other hand, all that represented an "official" government was a three - man Junta composed of Castillo Armas and two military colonels, the latter two who maintained and perpetuated the support of the military to the new junta but were themselves reluctant supporters of Castillo Armas (only due to the U.S. "threat").[192]

As we will see, Castillo Armas did not enjoy the support of any organized political party, nor command any loyalty from within the bureaucracy or within the military. His own "liberation" army was forced to remain based in a departmental capital near the Honduran border, removed from the politics in the capital. In addition, the different sectors of the agro-export industry had no unified political representation at the national level (no spokespersons for their collective interests and even particular producers e.g. of cotton, coffee, had at best departmental committees). The industrial / financial sector was then still relatively weak and unorganized, being the sector that had become the most divided over whether or not to support Arbenz and his "modernization" plans. Castillo Armas' only organized support resided within the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and the U.S. embassy, but even the U.S. had no military presence in the country. The general context at this time could have been, and should have been, extremely volatile; but it was not. Individual landowners ruthlessly attacked some of those people who had acquired land under the land reform program or had been politically active locally on behalf of the Arbenz administration, but the military / police as institutions were not (under orders from Castillo Armas) complicit in these retributions. Prominent "liberationists" formed the Committee of National Defence Against Communism to track down "Communists" but except for teachers in rural areas and specific civil servants, no massive purges took place nor were those departments and ministries created during the "Revolution" disbanded or dismantled.

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[191] J. Handy, (1984) p. 151 - 152.

[192] P. Gleijeses, (1991) p. 351 - 360.

As will be documented, the only force that kept Castillo Armas in power for the first year of his administration was the "threat" of greater and direct U.S. intervention in the country, and even this threat had to be reinforced by large amounts of U.S. economic aid and grants. The balance of political forces in the country never allowed Castillo Armas or the U.S. to undertake an orchestrated attack on all "anti-U.S." or nationalistic forces, as this would have involved an attack on all those Ladino "middle - class" sectors that occupied the major government institutions, comprised the new economic sectors of the country, and had been the dominant forces during the "Revolution."[193] Hence, once the prominent leaders of the various urban Ladino organizations had left the country, what had been the supposedly "radical" wing of the revolution was effectively gone. What remained was what had always been the real foundation of the ten year "revolution," namely the Ladino middle class represented by the military, an expanded government administration, and a newly diversified set of rural and urban economic activities.

An examination of the first months of the Castillo Armas regime are instructive in that Castillo Armas was immediately placed in a position of recognizing and advancing the interests of the political forces that emerged between 1944 and 1954. During the first two weeks Castillo Armas' Committee of National Defence had jailed or removed municipal leaders, department governors, and magistrates, and Castillo Armas named new individuals to these posts. In addition, illiterates were disenfranchised (hence the Maya majority) and labor unions were given three months to elect new boards to "rid themselves of Communists." All of these measures were carried through without opposition from urban quarters. In less than two weeks, what had supposedly constituted an "organized Communist threat to the hemisphere" and a "revolutionary government," had totally dissipated. The ease with which Castillo Armas passed and implemented anti-democratic laws that affected directly only the lowest classes, reflected the weak "popular" organization of the lowest classes and the "neutrality" of the urban middle / upper classes to either a "revolutionary" or a "democratic" agenda, a condition that was noted as evident prior to the resignation of Arbenz. In contrast though, within these two weeks the press (considered pro- Castillo Armas) was already weary of hearing Castillo Armas' attacks on the former government or his anti-communist measures and began criticizing and pressuring Castillo Armas for some idea of what were going to be his specific economic policies .[194] To this early criticism Castillo Armas really had no coherent response, yet it would become evident that his continued rule would be wholly conditional on "economic" and not "anti-communist" or "democratic" achievements.

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[193] The evidence suggests that the desire for a massive purge and brutal retribution lay more within the attitudes of the U.S. than among Armas and his "liberationist" forces.

The only early armed challenge to Castillo Armas' leadership came not from the organized "left" but from within the ranks of the military, specifically by cadet officers of the Escuela Politécnica at the beginning of August. After some 700 "liberationist" soldiers had come to the capital to participate in an eventual "victory" parade, they made the mistake of humiliating a handful of Politécnica cadet officers at a local bordello. In response, the humiliated cadets roused their fellow cadets and together with the assistance of some regular army troops (100 in total) attacked the hospital where the "liberationist" troops were stationed. In the two days of fighting that ensued in the southern part of the capital, some 29 were killed and another 100 injured. Castillo Armas, the U.S embassy and the officers were caught off guard and the "liberationist" forces found no support (nor did the cadet officers) from the rest of the military. Despite overwhelming numerical superiority, Castillo Armas's "liberationist" forces were forced to surrender, disarmed and marched through the streets of the capital as "prisoners of war," whereupon they were loaded into trains and dispatched from the capital by the small group of cadets. The cadets then surrendered themselves on the condition that they would not be punished. Although the press attempted to portray this as an Castillo Armas success, the U.S. embassy arrived at quite a different assessment.

> The U.S. embassy was more sober: the events had demonstrated "that there was very little active support for Castillo Armas in the Armed Forces"; Castillo Armas himself had shown "little imagination or resolution," and the "civilian anti-Communist and 'Liberation' organizations [had] lost all semblance of discipline [during the crisis]."[195]

The event, however, created a pretext for Castillo Armas to close the Escuela Politécnica (for two years) but as the U.S. embassy accurately observed, Castillo Armas lacked the support of the military generally and his own forces had been ill - prepared even to confront a small group of angry cadets. Furthermore, Castillo Armas' lack of "resolve" was only the first of a series of character indictments that the embassy was to level against him. For the U.S. it soon became painfully obvious that they were backing a figure that garnered no national respect as a leader and had no ability to implement the measures the U.S. desired. Although the continual U.S. "threat" was to facilitate the temporary implantation of a U.S. economic strategy, it was despite any "vision," "authority" or unity exercised by Castillo Armas and his "liberationist" allies.

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[194] See Hispanic American Report, 7, 7 (August, 1954) p. 14. Hereafter cited as HAR.

[195] P. Gleijeses, (1991) p. 360.

If there was any proof that the political discourse and "political agenda" of Ladino politics had been irreversibly altered by the 1944-54 experience, it was in the economic and social goals articulated by Castillo Armas by September of 1954. Castillo Armas outlined a five - year "rehabilitation" program that committed the government to the continued construction of hospitals, schools, housing projects, rural electrification and increasing the living standards in rural areas. A high priority was given to highway construction, this a visible continuation of the infrastructure programs initiated under Arévalo and Arbenz in the direction of "economic modernization and efficiency." "Land reform" was not going to be terminated, but was to be accomplished through different means. Although we may question the extent to which these projects were fulfilled and the manner in which it was done there is no doubt that Castillo Armas had to accept these "national" goals, this being a broad set of goals that were not advocated during the dictatorial phase and stood in marked contrast to the "vision" of Guatemala's neighbors of the time (Costa Rica being the only exception). The reason such a broad economic and social agenda was entertained by Castillo Armas, the presumed representative of the oligarchy and U.S. economic interests, was the fact that without at least outlining and planning this "modernization" agenda Castillo Armas would enjoy no political stability and his regime would surely collapse. As noted, and a factor which is totally in contrast to the dictatorial or "strong man" tradition of pre-1944 where strong dictators were installed to preserve oligarchic rule during periods of economic crisis, Castillo Armas's tenure was conditional on economic progress and the continual improvement in the lot of Guatemalan "citizens" (Ladinos).[196] Moreover, this agenda directly competed with the monopoly on infrastructure enjoyed by the UFCo. and its subsidiary companies in Guatemala. The costs of this enterprise (in an effort to keep Castillo Armas in power), which will be examined shortly, the U.S. had not envisioned at all when they forced Arbenz and the "Communists" from office.

The behaviour of the U.S. administration (and U.S. embassy) in this period is quite confusing and baffling, seeming to confirm that there was a deep American confusion and total misunderstanding about what the 1944-54 revolution had been based upon, namely "nationalist" and not "communist" principles. In the U.S. view these were inseparable when evaluating Third World governments and politics and thus they had a particularly difficult time understanding their new "allies" in Guatemala. The U.S. position also appears to have been wrapped up in a sense of "natural" superiority, putting them at a loss to explain why the "Guatemalans" did not understand that it was the Guatemalans themselves who were supposed to be grateful for the U.S. intervention against a "totalitarian" government and not just the U.S. At both an international and domestic level it had become recognized that the U.S. had had a direct role in forcing out Arbenz and installing Castillo Armas (and not possible to defend as an "internal conflict"), compelling the U.S. to justify its intervention and what it expected to achieve. To the former the U.S. maintained that a "Red threat" and thus a security threat had emanated from Guatemala, and to the latter the U.S. replied that Guatemala was to become a "showcase for democracy." What the U.S. did not expect was that for those Ladino sectors, which all along had wanted to "modernize" the nation, neither of these U.S. goals had been of primary importance to them and they felt that the U.S. should pay handsomely for the right to celebrate this ideological victory in the Western hemisphere. Therefore, Ladino Guatemalans wanted no less than that the U.S. completely finance this economic and social transformation. The U.S. could not understand this attitude from an "anti-communist" coalition that they had forged and put into power. It is evident that the initial premise guiding U.S. policy in the first months of Castillo Armas' rule was that the Guatemalans were (or should have been) "happy" just with being liberated from a "totalitarian" and "communist" dictatorship. Consequently, when Castillo Armas was confronted with an empty treasury upon coming to office, the U.S. only extended the advice that he seek loans from international lending agencies and private banking institutions.[197] Throughout the Summer and into the Fall of 1954, Castillo Armas' regime was continually denied loans by these agencies and the regime refused to borrow from private foreign banks due to the exhorbitant interest rates. At this point the most urgent problems were "pressing government debts," and indemnity for destruction incurred during the intervention, not any concrete economic projects. The U.S. had left Castillo Armas to run a country with a bankrupt treasury and no immediate international aid, and absolutely no assurances of any forthcoming assistance. By the middle of October Castillo Armas was compelled to do the extraordinary, decreeing an emergency "income tax" law (affecting the middle and upper classes) and reversing an earlier tax break on gasoline in order to raise some government income.[198] This was a shock to the Ladino elite affected, and it came at a time when the world price for coffee was then considerably depressed relative to that of the Arévalo and Arbenz decade. Castillo Armas' regime was thus sitting on extremely unstable ground.

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[196] As we have seen and will see in this chapter and the next, there is a clear distinction to be made between Ladinos and Maya as beneficiaries from the increased state spending after 1944.

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[197] See Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952 - 54. Vol. 4, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983) p. 1221 - 1222. Hereafter cited as FR.

When it came to actual U.S. aid and grant monies to the Guatemalan government, the figure that the U.S. had in mind up until October was about one million dollars, serious concern being expressed that any more aid than this and other Central and South American countries (not understanding the special case of Guatemala) might place similar demands on the U.S. for assistance and aid.[199] In marked contrast, the demands of the Castillo Armas Junta were revealed to be considerably greater and it was then also readily apparent that political instability was setting in, as manifested in the following memorandum.

> As a result our identification in Guatemalan official and public mind with liberation movement and statements by US officials concerning aid there is general expectation large - scale grant as witness Monzón's memorandum requesting some 280 millions. We have succeeded in reducing requests from 280 to 10. We believe we can cut 10 to 5 without bad effect. But we cannot go all the way to 1 without serious risk disillusionment and addition another element instability in already difficult and complex situation.[200]

From this memorandum it may be discerned that Monzón's request had been taken seriously by other Castillo Armas advisors, certainly taking the U.S. aback and forcing them to comment on this request. In addition it was becoming evident to the U.S. that this minimum amount (five million) was required to keep Armas in power and to acquire a bargaining advantage on behalf of various U.S. economic interests.[201] The next twelve months were considered "critical" for the Castillo Armas regime. On October 30th the U.S. government finally authorized economic funds for Guatemala, but not without notable pressure from both inside and outside of Guatemala.

> On October 30, Washington, somewhat embarrassed by accusations from some U.S. politicians that the U.S. had "neglected" Guatemala since the overthrow of Arbenz'(s) Communist regime, offered Castillo Armas $6,425,000 in economic and technical aid. The assistance, considered by some to be too little too late, is to be broken down as follows: $1 million for technical aid, $1,425, 000 for work on the 22-mile gap in the Inter - American

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[198] This income tax was complemented with a tax break on the importation of "luxury goods," in an obvious attempt to mollify the impending outrage of the middle and upper classes.

[199] Acting Director of the Foreign Operations Administration to the Secretary of State, Oct. 16, 1954. Vol. 4 (FR) p. 1231.

[200] Ambassador in Guatemala (Armour) to the Department of State, Oct. 22, 1954. Vol. 4 (FR) p. 1232 - 1233. Colonel Monzón was originally one of the figures in the three man Junta, resigning early in September in the interest of stabilizing Castillo Armas's rule. He remained as an advisor to Armas and other top level figures in the Armas regime.

[201] Ibid., 1233.

> Highway near the Mexican border, $500,000 to help complete the new Roosevelt Hospital in Guatemala City .... and $3 million for "general" economic assistance.[202]

A further problem still lay with the Guatemalan military, considered to be an unreliable and unpredictable variable in the political scene but which would "assert the determining influence in any political crisis in Guatemala."[203] As we may discern early on, the U.S. view of the possibility of Castillo Armas ruling Guatemala single - handedly (due to internal loyalty and support) was falling apart and the U.S. remained unsure of the military's position in this period. Moreover, the U.S. had already suffered two serious "embarrasments" vis-a-vis Castillo Armas / Guatemala, the one being the flagrant and continued U.S. parsimony that was revealed in the press, and the second being Castillo Armas' willingness to allow hundreds of asylees to leave the country (in accord with international law) without U.S. foreknowledge or approval. This occurred while the U.S. was pursuing a vigorous "anti-communist" campaign throughout Latin America in light of its Guatemala "success," and included documenting the whereabouts and activities of all known "communists" throughout the Americas. Castillo Armas' action dispersed these "communists" throughout Latin America. What Castillo Armas understood and the U.S. did not was that the majority of these individuals were respected Guatemalan intellectuals, journalists and writers whose persecution and conviction would have outraged urban Ladinos generally, given that far from being "communists," their only crime was that of being "anti-U.S." (nationalistic). This was also a sentiment that the "anti-communist" forces respected and shared to varying degrees.

Despite a U.S. commitment to both economic and military grants and loans by December, 1954, the Armas regime was facing a severe crisis:

> The popularity of the Castillo Armas administration is reported at a low ebb, with rumors circulating in the capital of new plots to overthrow the regime. There is said to be a feeling that Castillo does not have sufficient control over his administrative machinery. The army is said to be waiting for a chance to overthrow the government and set up a military regime. Weighing the possibilities of a coup, some observers point out that while the administration is not unified, the opposition is still less so. Dissatisfaction with the government appears strongest among the wealthy and professional groups, who disapprove of Castillo's proposed income tax law.[204]

As may be observed, none of these forces of "instability" could be identified as the "communists" or the political left. Then on January 19, 1955, a major military rebellion took place within the capital, one of the plotters being a former airforce commander under Arbenz and another, Colonel José Serra, who was the brother-in-law of Colonel Monzón (Monzón was then recognized as the major instigator who held enough support within the military to launch such an effort). An ample enough sector of the military remained intact, perhaps still sufficiently cowed before the U.S. threat, that the rebellion barely got under way before being put down. Although Castillo Armas attributed the rebellion to "pro-communist" elements, it was evident to both Castillo Armas and the U.S. embassy that these were not "revolutonary communists" but a frustrated and fervently "nationalist" officer class willing to take advantage of the unfulfilled Castillo Armas and U.S. promises for continued improvements in economic and social areas. An openly vocal opposition, through the press, was already developing around the issue of the trivial sums of money Castillo Armas had been able to secure from the United States. The following excerpt suggests that Castillo Armas was beginning to realize the limits of the "anti-communist" rhetoric and U.S. support, moving himself into a more critical camp.

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[202] HAR, November, 1954. p.12

[203] Secretary of State to the Secretary of Defense (Wilson) Oct. 27, 1954. Vol. 4 (FR) p. 1235. The secret report noted that economic assistance did not maintain the support of the military, and a seperate aid package to the military should be considered.

[204] HAR, January, 1955, p. 12.

> President asserts Embassy unfriendly his regime and Ambassador and Counselor excessively friendly toward Cordova; Mann too close large US companies, especially UFCO and IRCA.[205]
>
> President asserts UFCO furthering its private interests versus national interest. Gave as example company's failure give up control Guatemala's principal port; assert UFCO exerts various kinds pressure on Guatemala, asserts company endeavors utilize Embassy support. Gave as specific example UFCO collaboration with Cordova to delay US aid to Guatemala in order improve company's bargaining position in contract negotiations last month.[206]

Castillo Armas was obviously becoming suspicious of the motives of his U.S. backers, fearing that the U.S. was beginning to back another prominent figure, this being one of his closest advisors and a wealthy civilian by the name of Córdova Cerna. Very little of the original six million dollars pledged by the U.S. had reached the regime, at a point when internal politics compelled Castillo Armas to promise the immediate initiation of his development plans. Castillo Armas proceeded to contract out to private interests numerous planned public works projects (which formerly would have been undertaken by government administrations). It was policies such as this that have created the impression that Castillo Armas attempted to implement a radical "free market" strategy versus state intervention, and certainly with respect to the concessions to U.S. capital in oil exploration, the return of lands to UFCo., guarantees on future

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[205] Juan Córdova Cerna was a leading "liberationist" figure and advisor to Castillo Armas; Thomas Mann was the Embassy's Counselor.

[206] Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Embassy in Guatemala, Jan.22, 1955 (from conversation with Guatemalan Ambassador to the U.S.). Vol. 7 (FR) p. 52 - 53.

U.S. investments (against expropriation), and the reduction of import taxes, it is evident that U.S. capital was again (pre-1944) given preferential treatment for its continued operation in Guatemala. Within Guatemala, though, Castillo Armas had to play politics with the new sectors from the 1944-54 period such as the urban Ladino labor movement, the military, the bureaucracy and upper middle - class urban businessmen (property developers, contractors). With little in the way of "local capital" the government had become the principal source of investment capital. Thus the private contracting of public works was tempered by a clause that specified that 50% of those employed had to be from the Ministry of Public Works. This was an attempt to build support among not just civilian construction firms but labor and the bureaucracy in a time when existing and potential state revenues were dropping rapidly.[207]

By the end of January the U.S. embassy was visibly distressed by Castillo Armas and beginning to recognize that Guatemalan "nationalism" was a problematic factor in keeping Castillo Armas in power. Moreover, Castillo Armas was not the strong authoritarian figure that the U.S. had envisioned.

> There are moments when he seems almost pathetic. He must literally be led by the hand step by step. It will be a difficult task to do this without arousing nationalistic reactions, but we intend expand scope our efforts with Klein and Saks as one of main vehicles.[208]

The U.S. embassy's problems with Castillo Armas seem to be related to the U.S. desire for an authoritarian figure who could impose an extremely conservative fiscal agenda, failing to realize that Guatemalan society was no longer conducive to such economic and social measures, particularly in light of the U.S. - backed European reconstruction in this period. The U.S. embassy became increasingly wary of Castillo Armas' potential yet in casting around for alternatives the only economic group that would accept concessions to U.S. interests with a minimal level of aid was the landowning oligarchy. This attempt by the embassy to pull back support for Castillo Armas was later revealed publicly:

> Since the ousting of the pro-Communist government of President Arbenz last June, Guatemala has been looking to the United States for financial help, but so far rather unsuccessfully. In answer to a plea for aid by Castillo Armas last summer, the U.S. Government allotted $6.5 million to help Guatemala get on its feet. By the end of January, however, only half of the sum had been handed over to the Guatemalan Government.

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[207] The sharp decline in world coffee prices severely hurt the Armas government's level of spending as well as projected spending for the upcoming year, leaving the regime and the economy with far less monies than either the Arévalo or Arbenz governments, the U.S. remaining niggardly and noncommittal.

[208] Telegram from the Ambassador in Guatemala (Armour) to the Department of State, Jan. 25, 1955. Vol. 7 (FR) p. 62. Kleins and Saks was a private U.S. consulting firm that oversaw administrative spending and government planning.

> Washington's delay in giving aid, taken badly in Guatemala and even criticized by private sources in the U.S., has been attributed to the U.S. Government's doubts as to the political stability of the Castillo Armas regime.[209]

The U.S. was deeply confused and divided, as expressed by the fact that the Secretary of State (J. F. Dulles) and Vice - President (Richard Nixon) were both, confidentially and openly, giving full support to Castillo Armas and hence were continually taken aback by reports that Castillo Armas' position remained in a state of extreme instability, having received no U.S. funding to alleviate this political condition. In contrast, the U.S. embassy and all the major lending institutions continually refused to put any money or faith behind the Castillo Armas regime, fearing it would be a lost investment until the political situation was resolved, yet we know there was no "Red" or "popular" threat to his presidency.

Castillo Armas' efforts to appease Ladino urban interests led to the rather dramatic emergence of a unified landowning oligarchic opposition, revealing how fragile and contradictory the original "anti-communist" coalition was. As reported publicly, "[I]t now appears that the largest source of potential trouble for Castillo Armas lies in Guatemala's few but powerful large landowners, whose ideal seems to be an extreme rightist regime without any interest in the country's laboring masses."[210] By March the oligarchy had formed an anti-Castillo Armas political party, which included members who held positions within the government.

> The grievances of the military and the upper classes have been evident almost since Castillo Armas took over the government last June, but not until recently have these opposition groups given indications of uniting against Castillo in a single political organization. The anti-Castillo group is now coming into the front ranks of politics through the Anti - Communist Unification Party (PUA), a party which has been called reactionary and which would reputedly welcome a return to the days of the late dictator Ubico, who ruled Guatemala during the 30's and early 40's. Many of the PUA's leaders, wealthy landowners and businessmen, hold important posts in Castillo Armas' government.[211]

Cerna Córdova, a close advisor to Castillo Armas, was noted as the leading figure behind this party. What is worth comparing is the coalition / agenda that Castillo Armas was attempting to develop into political party support:

> Castillo Armas, for his own part, has inherited as backers in Guatemala City a group of young professionals and intellectuals who champion the preservation and advancement of the social and economic gains made since the feudalistic times of Ubico. This group, which formed a loose coalition under the name of the Committee of Anti - Communist University

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[209] HAR, (March, 1955) p. 59.
[210] Ibid., p. 58 - 59.
[211] HAR, (April, 1954) p. 107 - 108.

> Students (C.E.U.A) during the Arbenz regime, contributed greatly to Castillo's liberation movement which resulted in the ouster of the pro - Communist Arbenz government.[212]

This coalition, later to be known as the National Democratic Movement (MDN and precursor to the MLN) defended the social and economic gains of urban labor between 1944-54 against the efforts of the PUA to force labor back to a pre-1944 condition.[213]

The U.S. was beginning to recognize some of the inherent contradictions among the constellation of forces it had placed in power, the embassy Councilor observing that Guatemalan politics was "an incredible maze of intrigue, fathered by ignorance, inexperience, and native suspicion."[214]

> He cited the example of Clemente Marroquín Rojas' attack on Mr. Mann for allegedly recommending his expulsion. The Embassy had learned that the story came from inside the palace, where someone was busily adding to the thick layer of lies and rumors which covered the city, and which holds up the business which has to be transacted. President Castillo trusts no one, and seems to believe the last man who has spoken to him, in many cases. Not even his own cabinet ministers can be informed of matters discussed by the President with the Embassy.[215]

In the same memorandum it was noted that Castillo Armas was at a "stalemate" with his defense minister, his "liberationist" officers conceding that Castillo Armas could not put them in charge and remove the militarily popular Minister of Defence, Lieutenant Colonel Enrique Close de León (an "Arbenz hold over"), as "Close might simply move into the presidential office."[216] As the U.S. already knew, the "economic assistance being provided makes no direct contribution to winning and maintaining the support of Guatemalan Armed Forces."[217] The U.S. thus became more willing to deal with the Guatemalan military without the military being under the control of "liberationist" officers. Proposed aid had then been increased to 14 million dollars, 5 million alone going to the completion of the Atlantic highway and thus forever breaking UFCo.'s monopoly on transportation to the Atlantic port. Through April and May "political uncertainty and economic difficulties persisted," leading the U.S. embassy to issue the following assessment:

> Castillo Armas government continues be threatened with dissident or ambitious groups to left and right which in cooperation with military elements and encouraged by economic dissatisfactions potentially have capability of overthrowing government and creating political confusion in which Communist conspiracy could blossom again. That this has not

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[212] Ibid., p. 108

[213] Mario Sandoval Alarcón was the leader of the CEAU, then defending the rights of labor against the PUA.

[214] Memorandum of Conversations, Department of State, Washington, April 28-29, 1955. Vol. 7 (FR) p. 72.

[215] Ibid., p. 72.

[216] Ibid., p. 71.

[217] March 4, 1955. Vol. 7 (FR) p. 68.

> occurred is at least partially due to fact potential opposition is itself deeply divided. Basic facts are that Castillo regime depends on will of armed forces and that at present they are divided by conflicting personal ambitions and by unhealed breach between liberation and regular officers; former favoring tough authoritarian rule with widespread purges. Castillo's current policy is to follow middle path between two, playing off one against other and relying on his personal popularity and backing of the U.S. to discourage united move against his government.[218]

By the end of May it was recognized that the "collapse of the Castillo Armas" government would be a "disastrous political setback for the U.S." and emergency assistance was proposed, including 38.5 million to complete the Inter-American Highway, 14 million for the Atlantic and Pacific highways, more funds to equip the hospital in the capital, plus a "technical assistance program to help the Guatemalan Government modernize its administrative and financial systems as well as to improve agriculture, public health and education."[219]

Given this evidence, there is little to substantiate the view that there was a coherent "counter - revolutionary" project directed by Armas and the oligarchy with the support of the U.S. and the Guatemalan military. The U.S. National Security Estimate, which was prepared at the end of Castillo Armas' first year in office, further supports my claim that the "nationalists" and the urban forces in favor of state - directed development were still dominating the political scene. The U.S. was still at a loss as to how to understand these political forces.

> Many Guatemalans are passionately attached to the democratic - nationalist ideals of the 1944 revolution which overthrew the Ubico dictatorship. However, few understand the process and responsibilities of democracy. Guatemalan politicians are disposed to indulge against the government in power rather than to rely upon normal democratic processes to achieve their objectives. Hence there is an atmosphere of political unreality, characterized by individual manipulation and suspicion. At present many Guatemalans appear to be primarily concerned with preventing dictatorship of the right or of the left. A keen sense of nationalism, at times verging on the irrational, colors Guatemalan politics. There is a strong tendency to attribute Guatemala's backwardness to foreign investors, especially those from the U.S. Even the most pro-US elements in the area are not immune to this type of extreme nationalism.[220]

Such "nationalistic" sentiments were not lost on Castillo Armas, as the report adds:

> Castillo recognizes the political reality of the revolution and has accepted, in principle, most of the major reforms advocated by his predecessors. He has committed himself to the restoration of democratic forms and practices, to land reform, to the development of a modern economy, and to the protection of a free labor movement and other social gains. He is also guided by nationalism, among the more dramatic symbols of which are the Atlantic

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[218] Telegram from the Ambassador in Guatemala (Armour) to the Department of State, May 8, 1955. Vol. 7 (FR) p. 76.

[219] Vol. 7 (FR) p. 80 - 81.

[220] National Intelligence Estimate, July 26, 1955. Vol. 7 (FR) p. 91.

> Highway and a new Caribbean port, both of which were initiated to break the monopoly of foreign enterprise.[221]

It was further conceded in the report that the U.S. did not have unconditional support among any sectors in Guatemala and that only U.S. economic aid and a lingering U.S. "threat" had kept Castillo Armas in power:

> Most politically conscious Guatemalans believe that the US planned and underwrote the 1954 revolution, and therefore has a continuing responsibility for the success or failure of the present government. Castillo might have been deposed on any one of several occasions had his prospective opponents believed the US would not give him prompt support.[222]

Despite "strong leadership" by Castillo Armas being considered critical to the regime persisting reservations were expressed about Castillo Armas, observing that he vacillated "between instense suspicion and unreasoning trust" towards colleagues, and suffered "from frequent spells of nervousness and indecision."[223] Castillo Armas' main security body, the Committee of National Defense (controlled by "liberationist" forces) had "often proven incompetent, over zealous, and arbitrary and aroused public disapproval and even ridicule" leading to "strong pressures for its dissolution."[224] Castillo Armas' principal sources of opposition, that threatened the continued stability of the regime, were found among his own "right - wing" supporters:

> The extreme rightists among Castillo's supporters, together with influential conservative civilian elements throughout the country, probably constitute the chief potential source of opposition to the government. Most of these conservative factions strongly criticize Castillo for his "soft" policy toward both civilian and military office-holders of the previous regime, for his moderate policies toward labor and agrarian problems, and generally for his refusal to turn back the clock to 1943.[225]

The main element that prevented them from acting was the U.S. support for Castillo Armas, which could only be strengthened through "economic progress." It was felt that the military remained "somewhat dissatisfied" under Castillo Armas, the largest problem being its continued antagonism towards integrating with "liberationist" forces; nevertheless it was believed that the military would remain loyal to Castillo Armas (a reference to the fact that the "Arbenz holdover" and military favorite, Colonel Close de León, was still Minister of Defense).[226] Continuous causes of regime instability were also found in the emerging dispute between Castillo Armas and the Catholic Church hierarchy, in which the Church wanted no less than the "constitutional right" to own property and full control over the education system. As noted at the end of the report, Castillo Armas had consistently been "pro-U.S.," sought U.S. advice and counsel, and cooperated on international issues, but the U.S. was unsure if this was preventing or fostering internal instability:

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[221] Ibid., p. 91.

[222] Ibid., p. 94.

[223] Ibid., p. 94.

[224] Ibid., p. 97.

[225] Ibid., p. 99.

[226] Ibid., p. 95 - 96. Lieutenant - Colonel Close de León was never removed but promoted to full colonel under Armas, and later became commander of the national police force, another important military position.

> In fact, Castillo may have damaged his potential capacity for leadership by excessive reliance on US advice and aid . At the same time, Castillo and, to a greater degree, his associates on occasion suspect the motives of representatives of the US.[227]

In the concluding section on the "Prospects for stability in Guatemala," all that was stated was that "if Castillo survives his immediate economic and political difficulties" he had a "better than even chance of survivng for the next few years." This was qualified by adding that this depended on Armas maintaining a "moderate course," his "prestige as a mediator ... unifying the armed forces behind him," and thus making it possible for him "to remain in office long enough to establish the basis for responsible constitutional government." The report ends by stating: "[O]n the other hand, if the Castillo government should be overthrown, Guatemala would probably experience a protracted period of political instability. Rightist elements are more likely to be able to achieve this overthrow than any other group."[228] One may conclude from this report that all the U.S. was able to "hope for" was that the accelerated and increased levels of aid might keep Castillo Armas in power. There is no sense from this report that the U.S. was directly controlling or determining the actions of any sectors within the nation, nor could it be said that the U.S. was leading a unified oligarchic - military coalition and installing a coherent "counter - revolutionary" project (as much as they would have liked to). Rather, the report is filled with references to unfulfilled administrative matters, problems of regime disputes and divisions, and the ever present "nationalistic" sentiment that could only be temporarily mollified by promises of more U.S. money, monies intended to complete or enhance the economic and social programs initiated under Arévalo and Arbenz.

By the Summer of 1955 funds from the U.S. and other international lending agencies (due to U.S. pressure) began to flow into Guatemala and towards the numerous infrastructure projects that had been initiated between 1944 and 1954. Castillo Armas's internal prestige was enhanced (or the belief that U.S. aid was due to the U.S. being committed to Castillo Armas) by an official state visit by Castillo Armas to the U.S. in this period, and in conjuncture with the massive infusion of economic aid, temporary stability for Castillo Armas was induced. In the Fall of 1955 portions of the new constitution were ratified by the National Assembly (all Castillo Armas

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[227] Ibid., p. 104.
[228] Ibid., p. 106.

"supporters"), rejecting any attempts by Catholic Church to reassert its economic / ideological dominance, approving compulsory suffrage for literates, and even making suffrage optional for illiterates (estimated at 73% of the population). The last political "right" was contentious and considered an "about - face" by Castillo Armas who had, while in exile, advocated the permanent withdrawal of the suffrage for illiterates as it was assumed they were easily manipulated by "Communist elements." "The explanation of the change in policy lay in the administration's belief that an election with literate suffrage only would be too much of a risk for President Castillo Armas. It was feared that too many of the literate Guatemalans would vote against him."[229] Although this measure appears to be an act of political expediency, it significantly altered the political sphere as the rural countryside was again established as an arena for electoral competition (again an act totally antagonistic to the landowning oligarchy) rather than just the capital and the smaller rural centres.

By the end of 1955 urban Ladino interests were becoming more vocally opposed to Castillo Armas's "rule by decree" and the activities of his security forces, the incident in question being an expression of this unwillingness to put up with dictatorial extremes. When a primary school teacher studying law was arrested for "speaking ill" of the President, the press (considered pro-government) was united in condemning Castillo Armas and the security forces, considering the act to be a "monstrosity" and an attempt to "deify" the "men in office," and compared it negatively to the Ubico era. There was no problem with using force to round up " known Communists" but the arrogant use of state power was not to proceed without condemnation. The new labor legislation passed by the National Assembly was another slap at the "right" since "[O]n the whole, the rights to organize freely, to strike, to annual paid vacation, to equal salary for equal work, to a 48 - hour week and to a minimum salary have been satisfactorily preserved."[230] This also included a provision for subsidized health care. This legislation, which left intact those gains under Arévalo and Arbenz, was applied largely to urban Ladino unions and only to a small percentage of rural permanent laborers, but to none of the seasonal laborers (Maya) just as before. These disproportionate advantages, when placed in relation to the ethnic dynamic, provide strong clues as to why the Ladino - Maya distinction was to remain so salient. In the application of "progressive legislation" the state continually subsidized the "ethnic distinctions" that were to reinforce and justify the negative stereotypes attached with being "rural" and moreso "Indian." These differential applications of the "laws" based on "ethnic biases" will be shown to have pervaded numerous other economic, social and political spheres i.e. education, health care, community security, the treatment of laborers, land reform, land redistribution, land colonization, local services, transportation networks.[231]

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[229] HAR , No. 9, (1955) p. 406.

[230] HAR, No. 10 (1955) p. 459.

During the Fall the"electoral laws" were passed and then congressional and municipal elections were held. The national press and opposition parties were outraged by the brief time period permitted between the passage of the laws and the call to elections, which left Castillo Armas's MDN party as the only organized political entity capable of competing effectively.[232] Despite Castillo Armas's party winning all the seats and defending the timetable as a necessary measure to prevent the "Communists" from becoming organized, the press and the "anti-communist" oppostion ridiculed Castillo Armas and his defenders, calling the process a "mockery of democracy." Again it is apparent that the "anti - communist" rhetoric did not create a viable basis for stable government even among the "anti - communists." Then on New Year's Eve an attempt to overthrow the Castillo Armas regime took place by what, at the time, had to be considered the most unlikely of partnerships. It involved Colonel Carlos Paz Tejada, who had been Armed Forces Commander under Arbenz (thus labelled a "communist"), and Colonel Ernesto Neiderheitmann who was considered Castillo Armas' most loyal military figure, the Acting Armed Forces Commander and a leading officer behind Castillo Armas in charge of the "liberation" forces that had invaded in 1954 from Honduras. Although the coup was quickly suppressed, it is evident that the "communist / anti-communist" categorizations failed to capture the essence of the anti - Castillo Armas opposition.[233]

These political events were underwritten by a persistent and important economic concern by urban Ladinos, that being the continued blackouts and power rationing due to the fact that Empresa Eléctrica (a subsidiary of the U.S. Electric Bond and Share) was unable to meet the electrical demands of urban Ladinos (business, private) in the capital and nearby areas. The U.S.

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[231] Some of these aspects will be examined and referred to in this chapter. In the next chapter they will be brought together more fully with reference to specific regional dynamics that became more obvious during the 1960s. These factors will also be shown to have had a decisive effect on the strength and activities of the "working class," a theoretical "unity" that for Guatemala became sharply divided (rural - urban, Ladino - Maya) by the differential application of legislation and the forms of econmic activity financed by the state. This led to the peculiarly "Guatemalan phenomena" of rapid and sustained economic growth with very slow comparative growth in "labor organization."

[232] 5000 - member lists had to be submitted to the government for scrutiny before a party could be officially recognized.

[233] In the ensuing regime repression for this act, Armas deported a number of students (represented by the Association of University Students and the Association of Law Students) leading to a protest in the capital of some 4000 students, forcing the government to repatriate the deportees in a desire not to create "martyrs needlessly." HAR, No. 1 (1956) p. 11.

consulting firm (Kleins and Saks) revealed that the demand from this area alone was more than three times what the electric company was able to supply, and this was attributed to the Arbenz government's "threatening attitude toward foreign enterprises." The Guatemalan Ambassador to the U.S. voiced quite a different evaluation:

> Ambassador Cruz said that the power problem was fundamentally political. Public opinion was oriented, not toward what the company could do in the future, but what it had done in the past. The Ambassador said that the company had a record of poor service, high rates, lack of foresight, and generally deteriorating public relations. He said that under today's circumstances, if the government were to attempt to sign an agreement with the company on any of the bases which it thus far proposed, the administration would suffer serious loss of prestige which it has so laboriously built up since the 1954 liberation.[234]

The ambassador then informed the U.S. that the Guatemalan government was going to proceed by building its own power plants, adding that French companies had offered financing, unless the U.S. dealt with this problem. In the memorandum it is stated that the U.S. "had thrown as much cold water as it could on the Guatemalans' ideas of public power" hoping that the U.S. company could come up with some "imaginative proposals." This case is instructive in a number of ways. On one level it reveals the degree of industrialization that had taken place in and around the capital in a short period of time, significantly increasing the demand for electrical power (and not a concern of the landowning oligarchy). At another level and in contrast to the past, U.S. companies were no longer able to dictate all the conditions under which they would operate when confronted with an interventionist and modernizing administration, "free market" principles aside.[235]

In May of 1956 renewed protest emerged, initiated by the "booing" off the stage of those government officials set to speak during the May Day celebrations to the Ladino labor movement, while speakers critical of the regime and U.S. corporations were vigorously cheered. An "anti-communist" labor leader "declared that the workers' cheers for the left - wing speakers were a result of the unsympathetic official attitude toward the problems of labor" and not due to "Communists."[236] Even the AFL-CIO representative agreed that "members of the free trade union movement were disillusioned and discouraged due to the weak and at times contradictory labor policies of the government" and the Minister of Labor quickly asserted that labor statutes would be modified to allow a return to trade unionism.[237] By the end of June, Castillo Armas had instituted a "state of alarm" in response to what he felt was growing "communist" conspiracy. Students and workers in the capital "launched a bitter protest" in response to this measure, and a mass demonstration ended with the killing of 5, 18 wounded, and some 200 arrested by government forces. Following this government violence Castillo Armas instituted a "state of siege" (rule by decree). Despite U.S. efforts to support the "communist" theory their own embassy report acknowledged that Castillo Armas' basic "stability" was sufficient to ensure that no serious threat arose from the political left. In contrast the "non-communist" elements were a real problem.

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[234] Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, February 20 , 1956. Vol. 7 (FR) p. 109 - 110.

[235] The problems with the electrical company were to persist throughout Armas' term in office. Also the Armas regime never attempted to privatize the government - owned airline, Aviateca.

[236] HAR, 9, 5 (June, 1956) p. 227.

> When Castillo Armas overthrew the Arbenz regime, he was welcomed and supported by most of the non-communist elements in the country. Today, however, many of Castillo's supporters appear either to have turned against him or to have withdrawn into apathetic indifference. His support among the professional officers of the Army appears to have weakened, and some of the officers in key positions are reported to have joined the opposition. His political party won the elections to the Constituent Assembly only through the use of concentrated government pressure and in the face of popular lack of interest. Several anti-Communist sources have accused his government of widespread corruption in high places and of general inefficiency....[238]

Although it was recognized that students were the principle source of activity (thus considered "communist"), the U.S. recognized that the killing of the 5 students had "serious reprecussions for the stability" of the regime as the "President's position vis-a-vis the army, political leaders and conservative groups appears to have been enhanced at the expense, however, of his prestige with middle class and labor elements."[239] In conclusion, "[H]is communist and other enemies may be expected to take full advantage of this situation to the probable detriment of his prestige with the Guatemalan people."[240] The U.S. helped in advising Castillo Armas on the handling of this legitimacy crisis, the Assistant Secretary of State (U.S.) going so far as to suggest "that in dealing with demonstrators tear gas was effective and infinitely preferable to bullets."[241] Among the "students" deported at the end of August a certain Juan Córdova Cerna, the leading figure on the "right" and former advisor to Castillo Armas, was included "for alleged subversive activities."[242]

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[237] Ibid., p. 227 - 228.

[238] Memorandum From the Chief of the Special Research Staff, Central Intelligence Agency (Durand) to the Director of Central Intelligence (Dulles), June 19, 1956. Vol. 7 (FR) p. 120.

[239] June 29, 1956. Vol. 7 (FR) p. 124 - 125.

[240] Ibid., p. 125.

[241] Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, June 29, 1956. Vol. 7 (FR) p. 125-126.

What is evident from this is that at the end of two years of Castillo Armas rule considerable and widespread discontent had opened up among numerous "anti-communist" sectors. Throughout the end of 1956 and the first half of 1957 it was only U.S. economic aid and the continuing development projects that kept Castillo Armas in power.[243] What is also noteworthy is that the majority rural population (minus the oligarchy) were never a significant part of either the growing discord or beneficiaries of this economic aid, despite the cancellation and reversal of Arbenz' land reform program.

The Castillo Armas Regime and Rural Guatemala

It has often been observed that the Castillo Armas regime did not formally end the state's committment to "land reform" when it returned most of the expropriated lands to their former oligarchic owners, and replaced Decree 900 with another land reform program that left the state, in principle, obligated to resolving the "agrarian problem."[244] In terms of redistributing lands to those who did not own their own piece of land, Castillo Armas' agrarian reform program was, without a doubt, an abysmal failure in comparison to the numbers who had received land under Arbenz.[245] This has been the standard form of comparative analysis, demonstrating the "rightness" of what Arbenz attempted to accomplish (progressive but not too radical, implying that the U.S. and other economic sectors had nothing to fear) and the rural misery supposedly "reinstituted" and perpetuated by Castillo Armas and later regimes. The problem with this type of comparison is that it does not hold true or recognize the real motives for either the Arbenz or Castillo Armas land reform programs, in which the Ladino - Maya dichotomy is more directly revealed. The distortion lies in what observers consider to have been the "agrarian problem" in Guatemala and what the Ladino political forces of the day considered to be the problem with rural Guatemala. For the former "land reform" was initiated to alleviate landlessness and rural poverty, and was an expression of "popular demands" from the rural poor. For the urban Ladinos (before and after 1954) this was not the crux of the "agrarian problem." For them the problem was the monoculture (coffee, bananas), unproductive / inefficient land use (idle lands of the oligarchy), combined with "feudal" labor practices (mozos colonos). Arévalo and Arbenz met these concerns by promoting export crop diversification (cotton, sugar cane, cattle, oil seed) and Arbenz' "mild" land reform had attempted to "modernize" agriculture by putting more "idle lands" into productive use by turning these lands over to largely Ladino permanent workers ("feudal" colonos). Diversification, efficiency, higher levels of production, and scientific / technological applications were the motives for Arbenz' land reform, not landlessness and rural poverty. This explains why the lands of the oligarchy and UFCo. of the Ladino - dominated southwest were affected most by the land reform program and not the Maya highlands, as large and inefficient plantations were not the dominant highland structure. What is significant here is the fact that these different structures and motives clearly distinquish a Ladino "problem" from the pressing agrarian problems of the Maya who were confronted with real landlessness and rural hunger. This is why Arbenz' land reform is considered "modest" in that the best possible outcome envisioned from its application was the eventual emergence of a class of "middle - sized" farmers in almost exclusively the Ladino - dominated regions.

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[242] HAR, 9, 8 (Sept, 1956) p. 374.

[243] Memorandum by the Officer in Charge of Guatemalan Affairs (King), March 13, 1957. Vol. 7 (FR) p. 131-133).

[244] Susan Berger, Political and Agrarian Development in Guatemala. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992) p. 93.

[245] For a recent analysis on the return of expropriated lands, see Jim Handy (1994) p. 192 - 207.

After Castillo Armas came to power, individual members of the landowning oligarchy took it upon themselves to mete out the justice of the patron - peon relationship where either land redistribution had gone through or the colonos had been organized to exercise their right to their own piece of land. This retribution varied from the outright killing / expulsion to pathetically drawn - out apologies by colonos for being "duped by the communists." With no intention of denigrating what this class of Ladinos and "ladinoized Maya" colonos suffered, it must be noted that such retribution was not organized nationally nor sanctioned by the Castillo Armas regime. The military was not party to such activities and consequently the rural countryside did not experience a "pogrom" against those who had benefitted from the Arbenz land reform. Alternately, the continued access to land by the vast majority of these land reform beneficiaries surely played a role in maintaining the "peace" in the countryside, as there was little content to Castillo Armas' land reform program:

> In contrast to the Arbenz government, which distributed an average of 33,500 hectares to peasants a month, the Castillo Armas regime distributed an average of only 16,823 hectares a year.
>
> Actually, these figures are not surprising because land redistribution was never a goal of the government. What is interesting, however, is that, despite the little attention paid to the zones and only minor redistributions, the government succeeded in keeping rural popular demands at a minimum; indeed, there was little peasant unrest in the countryside. This success, as I noted earlier, was at least partially due to the fact that the peasnatry had very little experience with independent organization. Other factors, such as high illiteracy rates

> and divisions within the rural masses based on economic, geographic, and ethnic separations, also helped the government to subvert peasant demands and avoid rural unrest.[246]

Berger's analysis does not utilize either the Ladino - Maya distinction, or the mozo colono - seasonal labor differentiation in assessing rural Guatemala (using the "peasant" category instead), but her political overview is important in substantiating my previous point.[247] My own reference to rural "peace" (lack of unrest) is only meant in the sense that no organized "threat" to the Castillo Armas regime arose from the rural population. This "peace" should still be understood as entailing the most arbitrary and demeaning forms of violence by the landowning oligarchy towards "their Indians and mozos." It is worth adding that it was common knowledge that the Ladino oligarchy preferred Indian laborers / colonos over Ladinos (Spanish - speaking) as Ladinos were more likely to spontaneously organize, or to individually attack and kill a Ladino oligarch / administrator than were the Maya. Despite their being "privileged" in this fashion, no Maya family took it upon themselves to enjoy this opportunity unless they were absolutely destitute. The hundreds of thousands of families that migrated every year to the southwest or highland coffee plantations to pay of debts and earn wages always returned en masse to their communities in the highlands.

Throughout the rural countryside, and most graphically in the major export regions (southwest, the Verapazes) the actual relations of power between oligarchs and colono / seasonal laboreres had not changed significantly since 1944. The main difference was that there were then more medium - sized Ladino exporters emulating the practices of the old coffee oligarchy (single - crop production / Maya seasonal labor).[248] Decades of fear, land insecurity, cycles of starvation and migration, and the ethnic / class retribution between oligarch - colono / laborer, had created a vicious environment particularly in the agro - export regions where the authority of the Ladino oligarchy reigned supreme.[249] What the oligarchy no longer controlled was the

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[246] S. Berger (1992), p. 96.

[247] S. Berger, (1992) adheres to the standard Ladino interpretation of their history and the basic contours of the "class - dependency" perspective. What makes her analysis novel is the institutional - bureaucratic analysis she brings to this contemporary history.

[248] There is a certain Marxist tradition in Guatemala which believes that the new agro - export sectors were more progressive as they relied more heavily on scientific production methods and on "wage labor" (rather than the mozo system of exchanging land for labor). This claim is made despite the fact that the new Ladino agro - exporters treated Maya seasonal labor as bad or even worse than the coffee oligarchy, and unlike before, poisoned thousands of Maya families every year by using pesticides and insecticides in cotton production.

[249] It must be remembered that the Arbenz land reform never envisioned expropriating the Ladino oligarchy, only redistributing their idle lands. Hence they never lost control over the coffee production process and

"national" political scene of the urban Ladino capital of post - 1944. The "weakness" of the Castillo Armas regime, as state department / news reports attest to, was directly related to this division at the "national" level between the Ladino oligarchy and the urban Ladinos (middle / upper classes).

Thus Castillo Armas' questionable land reform merely conceded the authority of the oligarchy in the countryside while through U.S. economic aid and state spending Castillo Armas supported the "developmental" aspirations of the urban Ladinos. Whereas the old landowning oligarcy was thoroughly against state intervention (other than repression) and pro - dictatorship, the urban Ladino forces (press, military, bureaucracy, new agro - exporters) were committed to political party competition and state directed "modernization." Hence the "agrarian problem" of rural inefficiency and low rates of productivity persisted, which necessarily entailed fewer taxable export goods for development that would earn the support of urban Ladinos. Castillo Armas clearly wavered in his support of either group, and in addressing the land reform issue he acknowledged the rural authority of the oligarchy (gradually returning their expropriated lands) while recognizing the urban Ladino concern for increased agricultural production and efficiency. Supporting the diversified sector through subsidized scientific and technological aid was the principal means to increase rural export productivity as part and parcel of a larger "modernization" project (highways, military bases, ports, hospitals, administrative offices). In this respect he also kept to the earlier plan of dissolving the "feudal" structures by proposing to open more northern areas to agricultural production, giving title to unused public lands (except the national fincas) and establishing a few cooperatives in the Ladino south - west for mozos colonos who wanted their own piece of land.

This overview offers some insights into why Maya landlessness was not a concern and further explains why the "demobilization" of the rural countryside (disbanding of agrarian committees) was so rapid and complete, leaving Castillo Armas with no motivation to distribute large amounts of land. No colono / Maya opposition emerged from this numerical majority during his term in office. As will be documented later, this more minimal policy of land distribution and the opening of new agricultural areas was to remain ethnically differentiated as Ladino mozos were almost the sole beneficiaries of any land distribution policy by Castillo Armas and later administrations.

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really never lost any control over the rural countryside. Power did not shift, urban Ladinos simply acquired their own power base through the government, commerce, industry of the capital.

The End of the Castillo Armas Regime

Throughout the fall of 1956 and into 1957 the Castillo Armas regime remined "relatively stable," due in large part to the "economic boom" fuelled through U.S. grants and aid. Foreign loans were not pursued at the request of the U.S., as they "made a very poor impression on the Guatemalan people and assured their resentment against the government."[250] Large infrastructure projects were underway and corruption among government officials had become rampant. Despite no evidence of any organized leftist opposition, the Castillo Armas regime continued to request huge sums of money under the pretext that "it would prevent a return to communism in Guatemala," while refusing to resort to foreign borrowing.[251] Willing to justify some degree of aid given this specious "threat," the U.S. recognized that "in spite of conscientious effort by the Guatemalans and the substantial U.S. aid, the Castillo government has so far achieved only partial success in visibly bettering the lot of the average Guatemalan."[252]

By the Summer of 1957 the U.S. was attempting to extricate itself from this situation, and in talks with Castillo Armas the U.S. stated that they were unwilling to fulfill the Guatemalan demands for large grants to cover the 1958 fiscal year. It was suggested that Guatemala should begin to "make its own way" without U.S. economic assistance; it was observed "He (Castillo Armas) did not seem particularly surprised at this nor did he comment on it."[253] In these talks there was no mention of any "left opposition" in Guatemala but Castillo Armas was still troubled by the political right:

> The President said that his greatest concern was the threat to democracy in Guatemala by the extreme right - the reactionary forces. He said the big land owners and wealthy businessmen had urged that he take much stronger steps in repressing those who had been in any way involved in the previous government and that he had had great difficulty in refusing to go as far as they insisted that he go.[254]

On July 26, 1957, Castillo Armas was assassinated by a member of his Presidential Guard, but there was "no evidence of a coordinated insurrection against the Castillo government."[255] Although initially the gunman was thought to have "communist" connections, the U.S. added that the "[P]ossibility cannot be overlooked that assassination was rightist plot."[256] Shortly thereafter the case was closed, the police finding no evidence other than that the assassin acted alone (no clear motive ever being determined).

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[250] April 2, 1957. Vol. 7 (FR) p. 134.

[251] April 9, 1957. Vol. 7 (FR) p. 135. It has been estimated that by 1957 some 100 million dollars in U.S. aid had been spent in Guatemala while the rest of Latin America shared 60 million dollars over the same period.

[252] Ibid., p. 136.

[253] Memorandum of Conversations Between the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter - American Affairs (Rubottom) and President Castillo Armas, Guatemala City. July 2-5, 1957. Vol. 7 (FR) p. 138 - 142.

[254] Ibid., p. 141 - 142.

[255] "editorial note," Vol. 7 (FR) p. 142.

As this overview has highlighted, the Castillo Armas regime hardly represented either a dictatorial or "counter - revolutionary" success fashioned after the pre-1944 period. The numerous nationalistic and state - directed projects of the 1944-54 period were continued and enhanced. The persistent instability of the regime expressed a new political configuration in which Ladino urban and oligarchic interests clashed over the ideology and mandate of the post-1954 regime. Moreover, an anti-communist "nationalism" prevented the U.S. from being assured of loyal allies. Urban Ladinos mocked Castillo Armas' dictatorial excesses while the rural oligarchy railed at his "concessions" to labor and increased state spending to secure urban support. The U.S. had never envisioned that the costs of "stability" (economic / military aid) were going to be so high with so little improvement either within the internal politics or between the U.S. and its "liberated" example. As was observed, and despite the rhetoric of the day, there was no "communist threat" from the rural majority or urban quarters and the "communist / anti - communist" labels never satisfactorily captured the essence of the conflict in Guatemala or the sources of perpetual instability.[257] The inauguration of the Ydigoras Fuentes regime was to further demonstrate the weakness of the "counter - revolutionary" thesis and the view that a U.S. - oligarchic - military alliance was acting against the demands of the "popular classes."

Ydígoras Fuentes and the Contradictions of Ladino "Nationalism"

Immediately following the death of Castillo Armas a state of siege was declared and power then resided mainly in the military, headed by Defense Minister Colonel Francisco Oliva, one of the original members of the Castillo Armas three - man junta.[258] The events of the elections that were to follow, ending with the victory of Ydígoras Fuentes, are important evidence concerning the limited significance given to the internal politics of Guatemala by the "class - dependency" perspective. Ydígoras and his regime are often portrayed as a corrupt, right - wing, pro-U.S., pro - oligarchic continuation of the Castillo Armas heritage. What this fails to explain is how and why Ydígoras Fuentes was elected in opposition to the chosen leader of Castillo Armas' MDN political party and why he was eventually overthrown by the military in 1963 (the coup leaders considered to be pro - U.S. and pro - oligarchy as well). This perspective further fails to recognize the significant economic changes that occurred in this period (notably the formation of the Central American Common Market) establishing the context for the policies undertaken by the military dictatorship from 1963 - 66.

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[256] Telegram From the Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom. July 31, 1957. Vol. 7 (FR) p. 143.

[257] This remains a major problem in analysing the contemporary period in that little credence is given to the "nationalist" and "ethnic" dimensions of Guatemala, despite both of these having deep economic and ideological significance in Guatemalan society. As is becoming more apparent, both of these important elements have either been ignored, understated, or underestimated in their content by the prevailing "class - dependency" perspective.

[258] The U.S. embassy described Colonel Oliva as "good-hearted" but "no guts" and hoped that he would run in the election to replace Armas. Despite internal support and U.S. for his presidency, Oliva declined as this was "unconsitutional" due to his ministerial position in the existing goverment. Colonel Close de León had become head of the national police force, further proof that "liberationist" officers did not lead the military. National Security Council Memorandum, August 1, 1957, Vol. 7 (FR) p. 145.

The assumption of the class - dependency perspective is that there is a consistent movement across this time period governed by the will of the U.S., the oligarchy and the military, without taking into account the dramatic economic alterations (and implications) that were renewed through state - directed development. Hence, the numerous contradictions manifested within the Ladino political sphere from this activity generally go unrecognized along with the complex and conflictual party politics that emerged under Ydígoras, simply because it is assumed to have no significant dynamic on its own. In the next chapter I will examine just a couple of the important dimensions of this dynamic, namely the impact of the "economic crisis," the character of urban and rural Ladino social classes and their political expressions, and the relationship between the Ydígoras regime and the U.S.[259] This examination will demonstrate the continuing relevance of middle - class "nationalism" ("anti - U.S." sentiment) and the politics that emerged from its being strengthened in this period.

By early September (1957) in anticipation of a presidential election, numerous political parties and coalitions had already formed. Five of the thirteen parties coalesced to support the MDN candidate Miquel Ortiz Passarelli (the Union of Anti - Communist Parties), Passarelli promising to institute an "anti - communist" regime that would go on the offensive. The other main contender was General Miquel Ydígoras Fuentes (former minister under Ubico), often charaterized as a "right - wing" dictator (favored by the oligarchy), and supported by party of National Democratic Reconciliation and the Party of Redemption. Though categorized as the extreme "right - wing," one of the main platforms of this coalition was the "return of political exiles"[260] suggesting that the "right - wing" (if even associated) did not dominate Ydígoras' coalition. A third party, and the one that concerned the U.S. embassy for being "pro -

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[259] The specific economic changes by region and ethnic composition will be detailed in the next chapter as they relate to economic policies pursued by the Ydigoras regime beginning in 1960 (C.A.C.M.).
[260] HAR, (1957) p. 457.

communist," was the Revolutionary Party (PR) led by Mario Méndez Montenegro. At the time this party was dominated by Ladino urban professionals and represented a broad sector of the Ladino capital. With the disqualification of the PR by the electoral tribunal the election became a competition between the heir of the Castillo Armas party, Ortiz Passarelli, and the long - time foe of Arévalo, Arbenz and Castillo Armas, Ydígoras Fuentes. Ydígoras' campaign utilized a theme popular among urban Ladinos, namely an "anti - U.S." platform that denigrated the recent history of the MDN party. In the election in October the electoral tribunal claimed that Passarrelli had overwhelmingly defeated Ydígoras and in response, Ydígoras and other opposition forces orchestrated marches and protests on the National Palace leading to three days of rioting in the capital. The military took over once again, initiating a 30 - day state of siege. The military, though, did not side with the electoral tribunal and the MDN "victory" (bringing up the question of the degree of "liberation" influence in the military), and did not claim Ortiz Passarelli as the newly elected president. Instead, the election results were annulled and a new presidential election was slated for January of 1958.

At this point it is possible to speculate that the combined forces of the disqualified PR party and the Ydígoras coalition were sufficient to foster this outcome. Nevertheless, it was common knowledge that the majority of the electorate that supported either the PR or Ydígoras' coalition came from within the capital and thus the annulment of the MDN election victory by the military was a decisive defeat for the oligarchy. This oligarchy, which still "lived and breathed" the dictatorial tradition, required dictatorial political practices to remain dominant versus the political strength of the urban classes in an electoral forum. With the military's decision the oligarchy and "liberation" adherents were compelled to organize themselves "politically" (define an agenda and campaign) for an open and "honest" competition. To level out the playing field the PR under Mario Méndez Montenegro (labeled a "communist" by the U.S. embassy and opponents) was permitted to run, taking away from Ydígoras' coalition a considerable voting bloc and active urban support. The threat of a PR victory, a worst - case scenario for the U.S., was also real enough since the PR was thought to represent the combined interests of the Ladino urban working class, the middle classes, students, and many others who were "anti - U.S." due to the 1954 intervention.

In response to a resurgent political environment (as between 1944 - 54) the oligarchy and "liberationist" forces of the MDN coalition reorganized themselves, dumping Passarelli for a more prominent and recognized "liberation" figure associated with Castillo Armas, Cruz Salazar (former ambassador to the United States). Relying on the support of the Catholic Church and the various sized Ladino landowners, the MDN coalition entered a hostile and competitive electoral race in which the military made it clear that it would scrupulously defend an election outcome. By this time over 600 formerly exiled Guatemalans (under the Castillo Armas regime) had returned to Guatemala without incident, including prominent military figures, civilian professionals, scholars and labor activists.[261] Their return to Guatemala enhanced the "anti - U.S.," "anti - liberationist" forces, yet the U.S. was powerless to keep in effect the "exclusionist" legislation of the Castillo Armas period (which had only required a short exile for the majority of asylees). Apparently the Guatemalan military was not convinced by the U.S.'s definition of a "communist" as it had been applied to these exiles.

In the aftermath of the election of January, Ydígoras had captured the most votes but had failed to get the 50% majority required to win the presidency (the MDN candidate running second, the PR candidate running third). In order to gain this seat through National Assembly approval (MDN - dominated) Ydígoras accepted the condition of MDN figures receiving three cabinet postings and the possibility that Cruz Salazar would lead this coalition with the MDN in the next presidential election (six years away). A pertinent question is how Ydígoras was able to garner the largest number of votes when this second election was thought to be contested by the most antagonistic political positions, the PR and the MDN. To this question Poitevin offers a penetrating assessment concerning Ydígoras' electoral support:

> In 1958 after a lapse of political indecision produced by the assassination of Carlos Castillo Armas, leader of the invading forces of 1954, Miguel Idígoras Fuentes took power. Himself a man of compromise, an old general formed in the period of the Ubico dictatorship, he sympathized towards the old oligarchy that still remembered with nostalgia this period .... he enjoyed a certain prestige in the military, and by his attitude and declarations of a populist style, he aroused sympathies in large sectors of the population to which, with respect to the petite bourgeoisie, it saw in him one of their representatives. Finally, he is the man that publicly avowed himself to carry out the economic development plans posed by the technocracy.[262]

As may be observed, this coalition was a highly contradictory and ultimately unstable coalition that pitted "nationalists" against "pro-U.S." sectors, and a sector of the rural Ladino oligarchy against the urban lower, middle and upper classes. As a consequence, the Ydígoras regime went through a series of transformations and "crises" in this open political environment in which Ydígoras unsuccessfully attempted to appease and reconcile these diverse interests. It is important to lay out and examine the broader spectrum of political positions that emerged in this time period as it more fully accounts for the increasing party fragmentation and political instability that took place during the Ydígoras regime.

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[261] The U.S. continually pressured the appointed interim civilian president to act against allowing back the "communist" exiles but this was never carried out. What is of interest here is the fact that power and authority at this time rested with the military, not the president, and the military / police made no effort to track down and expel or prevent from returning numerous exiles that the U.S. had defined as "communist" due to their activities under the Arbenz and Arévalo governments.

[262] R. Poitevin, (1977) p. 177 - 178.

In discussing the urban Ladino middle class, I must stress that this was not a united or cohesive class as there were numerous divisions related to particular interpretations of what the 1944 - 54 period represented in terms of political and economic goals. For a major sector of this class, such as small and medium - sized businesses, commerce, domestic industry and some of the urban working class, the goals were the continuation of urban capitalist expansion underwritten by state financing / regulations, and accountability through competitive elections ("liberal - democratic" interpretation of 1944-54). Within this sector there were shifting tendencies over the extent to which the needs of the lowest classes (urban workers, unemployed, mozos colonos) should be met directly through state services (education, health care, housing, land reform) or left to be resolved by the expansion of the urban and agro - export economy. This fraction of the middle class was to be the strongest in terms of cumulative wealth and influence over the direction of the economy.

This group was also "anti - communist" but exercised a grudging relationship with the U.S. / U.S. corporations, recognizing the necessity of "foreign loans and investment" (as revenue for state spending) while rationalizing this as a necessary evil until the economy had "developed." There is a certain variant of the "class - dependency" perspective that sees the political parties associated with this developmentalist ideology (PR, Ydígoras coalition, and later the PID, Christian Democrats) as just a small "elite" of malevolent and duplicitous "power - seekers" (due to compromises and coalitions with the oligarchy and the U.S.).[263] This interpretation understates the broader level of support this ideology had within urban and rural Ladino circles and fails to recognize that these people truly believed that this was a workable modernization strategy that could develop Guatemala into a fully independent nation (economically) while gradually resolving the internal problems confronting the nation. As a result, many observers often misinterpreted the actions of these modernizing forces as they consistently appeared to deceive or downplay their reformist rhetoric by interacting with the oligarchy, U.S. economic interests, and / or the occasional "military dictatorship." This interpretation overlooks the degree to which the officer class of the military identified with this sector of the middle class and was committed to this development vision. This ideology will be shown to have fostered a dynamic and aggressive developmentalist military, as opposed to a "reactionary" and defensive military that simply defended the oligarchy (the former being far stronger and more deeply "entrenched" in society than the latter variant which had prevailed in the pre- 1944 "dictatorial" era). This developmental aspect of the military was to be greatly enhanced in the later stages of the Ydígoras regime, and will begin to explain why the Guatemalan military has been more successful than any other military / dictatorship of the region in establishing and expanding its role in Guatemalan society. Unlike other military institutions, it has been able to draw support from very diverse sectors of this fragmented society across different time periods, and this, I will later demonstrate is due largely to the Maya - Ladino and rural - urban division.

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[263] Susanne Jonas (1991), p. 61.

A second but smaller fraction of the middle class identified itself more closely with more radical interpretations of the 1944-54 period, and this included some sectors of labor, the university (particularly law and medicine), educated professionals, and student organizations. From this sector there were to emerge several political divisions but generally it was unified behind an "anti - U.S." or "nationalistic" development strategy and emphasized the creation of stronger middle - and lower - class Ladino political organizations. Ironically, during the late 1950s and through the 1960s the "communist" Guatemala Workers' Party (PGT) aligned itself more behind the economically stronger middle - class sector as a "strategy" to back the achievement of power by a "national bourgeoisie" at which time a "revolutionary socialist" program would be adopted. It is worth mentioning that the publisher - politician, Clemente Marroquín Rojas, far from being a "maverick" or "enigma," actually derived his own political position from these two established middle - class positions. He fully accepted the historical critique and "nationalist" agenda of the weaker of the middle - class sectors while denying that this was a political position exclusive to the domain of the educated "radicals" and of the "lower classes." Rojas firmly believed that Guatemala could modernize to the benefit of all its citizens without U.S. economic assistance or a radical reorganization of society.

It was also under Ydígoras that the traditional oligarchy (principally coffee) organized itself "politically" in response to the continued exclusion of their demands as the MDN party proceeded to divide internally, supporting either the Ydígoras coalition or aligning with the "communist" PR party. A splinter group within the MDN then formed the Movement of National Liberation (MLN) in 1960, committed to an "anti - communist, anti - labor, anti - urban" agenda and clearly representative of the old oligarchy and the most reactionary of business interests in the capital (which tended to include U.S. business interests). The MLN placed itself in opposition to the creation of a broader mass - based party, favoring a repressive and restrictive social and political sphere. A major source of MLN urban support came from within the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, a hierarchy that identified with the Falangist tradition of Spain and upheld the "virtues" of traditional oligarchic rule. Consequently, the MLN presented an ideology with little mass appeal and the party lacked a stable electoral base as even the small and medium - sized rural landowners (Ladino exporters) were unreliable in the face of political parties that promoted the modernization of the nation's rural infrastructure and subsidies to diversified producers. The MLN, like other political parties, were to press for advantage through the military but only as a subordinate faction was this party ever able to acquire a portion of "state power" and only for a brief duration (1970-74).[264] This was the broad but divided political spectrum that was to appear under Ydígoras Fuentes as the political restraints of the Castillo Armas period were removed (including the dissolution of the Committee of National Defense). It is also because of these divisions across the Ladino ideological spectrum that the military, as an institution, was to rise to the forefront of Guatemalan politics as the main arbitrator of political conflict while concomitantly keeping the administrative side of the state functioning, preventing it from becoming divided by competing political interests.

What underlay and fueled the dynamics of these political divisions and realignments was the severe economic crisis that was to persist through Ydígoras' tenure. The economic crisis was a result of two factors, one being the protracted and declining price commanded for coffee in the world market. The Guatemalan economy, despite its infrastructure programs and agro - export diversification, was still beset by a heavy reliance on the fortunes of the coffee industry which directly affected the levels of state spending. A second factor was that Ydígoras, regardless of his "anti - communist" credentials, was considered by the U.S. to be more "independent" than Castillo Armas. His "anti-U.S." and nationalistic campaign rhetoric had troubled the U.S. and further justified the U.S. intention to dramatically reduce aid and grants to Guatemala. In marginalizing the MDN in his cabinet (only one appointment), by choosing Clemente Marroquín Rojas as his vice - president, and then allowing the return of the "communist" exiles, Ydígoras quickly represented to the U.S. an unreliable ally in the region. In a period of low returns for coffee exports, the U.S. hesitancy on future aid (which had accounted for some 20% - 30% of the state budget) seriously jeopardized the "development" plans of the Ydígoras regime and its ability to appease the broad urban and rural interests represented in this coalition. In addition, Ydígoras' commitment to a more open Ladino political environment served to bring to light the levels of corruption that had become routine under the Castillo Armas regime. In an attempt to break with the past, Ydígoras publicly condemned the corruption of the past three governments but he was never able to reduce these practices in his own government. Nevertheless, in principle and practice, Ydígoras surprised all observers by allowing an open Ladino political spectrum to emerge (even the PGT, though constitutionally "outlawed," was openly active in the capital), much to the shock and consternation of the U.S. embassy.

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[264] As will be demonstrated, there was no direct affiliation between the MLN and the military and when a military - dominated party (almost all political parties were a mix of civilian and military figures) formed a coalition with the MLN, invariably the military figures had to force upon the MLN a "progressive stance" to garner electoral support. This eventually led to a clear break between the military and the MLN by the mid - 1970s.

Within this political spectrum Ydígoras attempted to play off all these competing forces (including the U.S.) against one another. Versus his most powerful opponent, the U.S., Ydígoras justified all his actions in terms of an "anti - communist" rhetoric arguing that it was a better strategy to allow the "communists" (which for the U.S. included the "anti-U.S." forces of the PR) to operate in the open as a way to monitor their activity and to prove to the political left that "economic development" and "liberal democracy" were superior to radical social change. As Ydígoras was quick to point out to the U.S., this was only a workable strategy to the extent that the U.S. continued to provide large sums of money towards such a project. Only four months after taking office Ydígoras made what the U.S.embassy, totally taken aback, considered to be a proposal of "staggering" proportions:

> Although Vice President Clemente Marroquín Rojas had criticized Ydígoras Fuentes upon learning that he was to ask for a loan from Milton Eisenhower, the president told Dr. Eisenhower that Guatemala needed $95 million in long - term credits for major economic development projects. Ydígoras Fuentes cited eight major areas in which Guatemala needed assistance: agricultural development, housing, electrification, highways, hospitals, industrial development, the city of Guatemala's water supply, and the development of El Petén, the country's least developed area.[265]

In a confidential summary of the Milton Eisenhower tour of Central America it was observed that Ydígoras's position was not unique among the various Guatemalan political and economic sectors. It was reported that "Guatemalans felt that the period of Communist - dominated rule entitles them to a special position. They frankly express their hope for a contiuation of US aid at approximately the same levels."[266] Further, "[T]he Government of Guatemala has very ambitious plans for the development of the country, and evidently feels that large - scale US assistance will continue".[267] The report noted an unwillingness to rely only on the "potential of private investment" or "private enterprise" to develop the economy, which the U.S. suggested was due to past experiences with state directed development:

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[265] HAR, (1958) p. 365 - 366. Dr. M. Eisenhower, brother of U.S. President Eisehower, was on a fact finding mission through Central America. Embassy reports note that only in Guatemala was such a broad set of proposals and large request for aid made to the U.S.

[266] Summary of Discussions in Guatemala during Milton Eisenhower's Visit, July 30 to August 1, 1958. (FR, micro. suppl., 1991) p. 84 - 1086.

[267] Ibid., p. 84 - 1086.

> Because of Guatemala's past association with Communist - type policies, and the Government's tendency to try to regulate non - agricultural enterprises more and more, some many possible private investors may have been discouraged from placing their money in Guatemala, although the country's official policy is to private investment, both foreign and domestic.[268]

The U.S., no doubt, felt uneasy with the way in which prominent sectors of Guatemala wanted to develop the country, as a powerful interventionist state role accompanied these development plans. Given the "price tag" and U.S. reservations concerning Ydígoras' disposition, this was an economic and political strategy that the U.S. was not going to commit itself to even if it served to undermine the strength of "anti-U.S." and "communist" forces in Guatemala, repression being a far more cost - effective measure in the eyes of the U.S.

Within Guatemala these overtures to the U.S. led to public denunciations of the government by "anti-U.S." forces, including by Ydígoras' vice - president Marroquín Rojas, favoring instead a more independent development course that would lessen Guatemala's dependence on U.S. aid and U.S. "interference" in internal affairs.[269] As Ydígoras played both the pro- and anti- U.S. forces, bargaining for aid with the U.S. while allowing "anti - U.S." sentiment to be openly expressed, he successfully coopted important figures from both the PR and the MDN to his strategy, leading to a fragmentation of both the political left and right. This resulted in a plethora of new political parties within the Ladino left and right. Due to this fragmentation, Ydígoras' own contradictory political coalition remained dominant but permanently in "crisis," rebounding from one scandal to another while state revenues continued to decrease. For both the general public and the U.S. the position of the military remained a mystery.[270]

> The Mexican weekly Tiempo reported that the Army, under the present administration, had not clearly defined its position; other observers stated that the political outlook of the military had been ambiguous ever since General Ydígoras Fuentes became President.

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[268] Ibid., p. 84 - 1086.

[269] It was known publicly that the U.S. wanted Ydígoras to restrict political activity and broadly apply "anti - communist" measures. This infuriated the main stream press and the opposition parties. Marroquín Rojas took this one step further and entered into open conflict with U.S. embassy and agencies overseeing the implementation of development programs, arguing that these oversight powers of the U.S. were a disgrace to the national sovereignity of Guatemala.

[270] From embassy reports there is no evidence that the U.S. had gained any allies within the military nor was it sure as to how the military would act in the face of a renewed open political sphere. All that is observed is that the military is likely to support Ydígoras until there is widespread popular discontent.

> Speculation ran the gamut from identifying military officialdom as anti - Ydígoras to considering it 100% behind the President.[271]

At a minimum it could be said that the military had no overt qualms about the "anti - U.S." sentiment being expressed, and obviously was not concerned about the "communist threat" to the same degree as the U.S.

By the middle of 1959 Ydígoras was bargaining hard with the U.S., threatening the U.S. to either provide him with the economic aid he required to meet the demands of competing interests or vowing to turn the government over to the "nationalists" and the "leftists." Sections of a "secret" U.S. document are worth quoting at length on this political stance by Ydígoras:

> Ydigoras has not forgotten nor been allowed to forget we were lukewarm toward his plans to reach the Presidency of Guatemala in 1954, 1957 and 1958. He was somewhat placated during his post - electoral visit to the United States and our relations ran fairly smoothly until a few months after the visit to Guatemala of the Dr. Milton Eisenhower mission. Despite all the efforts made to forestall such a development, Ydigoras wanted to believe and did believe that we would heed a large part of his requests for $95 million dollars in loans...
>
> ...It must be recognized that Clemente Marroquin Rojas' loud complaints that United States aid is a "national shame" have wide appeal even to persons who feel that United States aid must be continued. These people therefore look for ways to remove the stigma attached to aid (i.e. the supposed subservience that it imposes on Guatemalan governments), as minimum interest rates and the transfer to Guatemalans of majority authority for the administration of such aid. Our inability to go along with such an approach had made Ydigoras susceptible to the intrigues and murmurs of a weird assortment of [words blacked out] counselors,....
>
> Ydigoras is rumored to have said that he will do anything to prevent the Department from handling him "as it did Arbenz". He is quite capable, if led to believe that such a fate is imminent, of turning over the Government to the forces he believes would give us the hardest time in Guatemala .... However, he does not seem to have made up his mind definitely to throw the game to the nationalists and / or leftists. While toying with the idea, he also is assuming anti - Communist postures, as in calling ODECA Ministers of Goverment together to discuss the communist problem and in (presumably) inspiring Consul General Urrutia's warning to the Wall St. Journal on June 3 that, if the pro - Communist left wins the November congressional elections and subsequently the presidential elections, it will all be our fault.
>
> Ydigoras is volatile and if ways could be found to support tangibly our assurances that his advisors are wrong in claiming the Department seeks his downfall, it might well be possible to work fairly peacefully with him while he remains in office ....
>
> We should keep in mind that resentment toward the Department is currently reflected in his attitude toward other things American. Recent new regulations imposed on oil companies patently reflect suspicion that the companies are plotting to hide oil discoveries from him

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[271] HAR, (1958) p. 541.

> and so deprive his Government of the means for resolving all its problems. If he goes militantly nationalistic, it seems probable that the first to suffer will be American enterprises, beginning probably with the Empresa Electrica, and so on down the line.[272]

The U.S. understood that this was no idle threat as they had observed a "marked swing to the left in Guatemala," the "left" encompassing mostly a heightened "anti-U.S." sentiment expressed by the major political figures and even the press. In this hostile atmosphere the U.S. unsuccessfully searched for potential allies:

> The objective to be pursued would seem to be the development of a moderate left capable of promoting a healthier social, political and economic climate than has been possible under the traditional ruling classes. Unfortunately, liberal elements in Guatemala seem to be almost as badly split (although perhaps not so violently at odds) as the right. The one element responsible for attempting to hold them together (for the time being) is the communist.
>
> The Guatemalan left generally tends to be intensely nationalistic, or at least to value greatly the political uses of hyper - nationalism. American business in Guatemala seems likely, in certain cases, to play into the hands of demagogues and keep the nationalism issue alive, making our efforts to sponsor a moderate left more difficult.
>
> Ydigoras' approach to the communists has been a source of grave concern to us. However, we must recognize that it has not been entirely devoid of merits. It has enabled him to boast of respecting individual liberties and has reduced tensions. It has also helped to sort the goats from the sheep, which was an almost hopeless task under Castillo. The return of some prominent, fondly remembered Arbencista exiles has deprived them of martyrs' crowns and revealed some as ordinary human beings who are somewhat out of step with the times. The great defect in Ydigoras' handling of the communist problem has been his unwillingness to clamp down on clearly identified agitators and organizers.[273]

This report gives no indication that Ydígoras and his regime were either "pro-U.S." or that the U.S. felt secure in its post - 1954 relations with Guatemala. Rather, there is an apparent concern by the U.S. that it was again in a position of having to deal with an "independent" national position over which they lacked any internal influence.

Although the U.S. was not to come close to donating the levels of aid requested by Ydígoras, Ydígoras was able to force the hand of the U.S. to continue significant levels of economic aid. With the open and contentious political atmosphere that had reemerged in the capital, and the fact that by the end of 1959 the economy had entered a severe recession (due to coffee prices), the Ydígoras regime persisted into the 1960s through a series of protracted "crises." In this atmosphere Ydígoras' ability to bargain, cajole, purchase and divide the opposition, both within and outside of his coalition, was to prove futile in the face of a persistent economic reality: Guatemala was still overly dependent on the fortunes of one major export crop. Diversification, as of yet, had failed to diminish the effects of the external market place on the internal economy. Ydígoras' closer relationship to the U.S. for aid only served to antagonize those "nationalistic" forces that saw the United States as the root cause of Guatemala's economic problems and not a solution to them. Eventually specific sectors of the "middle class" were to unite against him on this issue as the economic crisis persisted and state spending was restricted.

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[272] Memorandum from the Director of the Office of Central American and Panamanian Affairs (Stewart) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter - American Affairs (Rubottom). Washington, June 12, 1959. (FR, micro. suppl. 1991) p. 84 - 1115 to 84 - 1119.

[273] Ibid., p. 84 - 1119.

I will close this chapter here as events from 1960 onward represented a significant alteration in both the existing economy and Ladino political forces, in which the rural and ethnic features of Guatemala were to figure more prominently in these spheres. By 1959 though, it was still apparent that the urban middle - class "nationalistic" and developmentalist forces were dominant in the political sphere. There is no evidence to suggest that an organized and coherent "counter - revolutionary" agenda had been inaugurated by the combined forces of the U.S., the oligarchy and the Guatemalan military, or that a rural and urban "popular class" opposition was being denied political influence by these combined forces. This depiction of the political forces in Guatemala radically simplifies what had become a very complex and divisive political - economic situation. The ethnic and regional dimensions will be shown to deepen the problems related to categorizing the rural majority as constituents of a "popular class."

Conclusion

I have laid out in considerable detail the political dimensions of the post - 1954 period up to 1959 in order to demonstrate the significance of the internal political scene (with all its contradictions) and how this shaped the way in which the U.S. related to Guatemala. As has been documented, this was not an amicable alliance between the U.S., the oligarchy and the military against the "popular classes" of the Guatemala. There is even less to substantiate the view that the internal affairs of Guatemala were directed from abroad by the U.S. In fact, the "low - cost" intervention and control of Guatemala initially envisioned by the U.S. had totally failed. Only Guatemala's "dependent" economic status kept the U.S. - Guatemala relationship intact, but this had few ideological and political supporters from within the dominant Ladino sectors of the day.

The work of René Poitevin, enhanced with reference to several other descriptive sources, has led to a significantly different interpretation of the first phase of the post - 1954 period. It was during the 1960s, as a result of numerous economic initiatives put in place under the Ydígoras regime, that the national economy (particularly the economy of the capital) was to undergo profound changes. This was to lead to important alterations in the existing Ladino class structure and political parties as the "national" economy expanded at a rapid rate. This expansion, in which the military was to play a prominent role, is what I refer to as the "second phase of capitalist expansion" (the first being in the late 1800s) when prominent urban Ladino sectors attempted to overcome the severe limitations imposed by the nation's reliance on the coffee industry. The diversification project undertaken will be shown to have brought this Ladino development project into direct conflict with the rural areas populated by the Maya majority, in which the latter were ill - prepared for the methods utilized in this economic expansion. As I have pointed out in this chapter, this developmental expansion was not contingent on adhering to any "free market" or "private investment" principles. State intervention was to be the principal means to achieve these Ladino development goals, and this is what markedly increased the ability of several Ladino sectors to overcome certain geographical and regional limitations to transforming rural Guatemala.

Chapter Four

Ladino Politics (1960 to 1968)

The 1960s are considered a tumultuous period in Guatemala history. It was during this period that political observers both within and outside of Guatemala theorized that the conditions for a social revolution were extremely favorable. Persistent extremes in wealth, political protest, increasing state violence, a military dictatorship and the first guerrilla activity favored the assumption that the internal politics were rapidly gravitating towards a radically reformist or revolutionary alternative. What has largely gone unrecognized about this period is how the economic expansion and diversification (largely in the capital) decisively altered the balance of Ladino middle class forces, in which the more moderate reformist sectors were to ally themselves closely with the military against a revolutionary agenda. This dynamic will be carefully examined in this chapter demonstrating the numerous divisions among the forces of "opposition" and how a moderate but reformist agenda not only became firmly established politically, but was also extremely hostile to more radical political alternatives. What will also be critiqued is the proposition that Guatemala had socio - economic conditions conducive to revolutionary guerrilla activity. Although the failure and defeat of the first rural guerrilla offensive between 1963 and 1968 has been attributed to divisions within the guerrilla movement and conflicting strategies, I argue that these are expressions of a deeper structural problem related to the extremely "non - revolutionary" character of rural Guatemala. Utilizing a perspective that delineates the varied socio - economic conditions of different regions in Guatemala, I will evaluate the potential for political organizing under specific rural environments and demonstrate why the rural guerrilla organizations enjoyed only a limited degree of initial success in only one area of Guatemala. This section will establish the context for a more in-depth examination of the socio - economic changes by region throughout the 1970s (to be presented in the next chapter).

Although it had not been clearly formulated at this point (between 1959 and 1968) the "class - dependency" perspective was to emerge from the events of this period, thus deepening the analysis of what had been largely a "nationalist" Ladino middle class understanding of Guatemalan history. It was during this period that "1954" became a benchmark for understanding all later events through the assumption of an ongoing "counter - revolution" directed by the combined forces of the military, the oligarchy and the U.S. Within this reading of history both Castillo Armas and Ydígoras Fuentes were seen as representatives of oligarchic and U.S. interests. It is argued that the military coup of 1963 that overthrew the Ydígoras regime was a response to broad - based protest by opposition forces in the capital and also to a new phenomenon, an armed guerrilla movement in the countryside. The latter factor is considered particularly important as the predominant view has been that rural Guatemala was a "hotbed" of revolutionary potential (due to the extreme poverty), awaiting an organized and revolutionary leadership. The Peralta dictatorship (1963 - 1966) is understood as a continuing effort to maintain the dominance of the U.S. - oligarchic coalition in the face of an electoral and armed threat from the "popular classes," and clear proof of the ongoing "counter - revolutionary" project in Guatemala. This project was then supposedly refuted again in 1966 with the election of the civilian reformer Julio Méndez Montenegro. Méndez Montenegro, though, was unable to act on behalf of the "reformist aspirations" of the masses because, as a condition of his becoming president, he was compelled to submit to the dictates of the military, a military that ruthlessly destroyed the existing guerrilla movement and other forces of opposition in the late 1960s. Thus, the argument goes, the military had temporarily nullified the possibilities for either revolutionary or reformist activity by the late 1960s, and the oligarchy and the U.S. remained firmly in control due to the repressive strength of the military.[273]

What will be analyzed in this chapter is the extent to which events during the 1960s have been misinterpreted, contesting the view that this period may be understood solely in terms of a societal dichotomy between the military - oligarchy (backed by the U.S.) versus a large and potentially revolutionary majority. What this perspective lacks is a critical assessment of both the reformist and revolutionary movements in this period. It will become apparent that a sharp distinction must also be drawn between the revolutionary and the reformist agendas as they most often were at odds with each other. This will be shown to have taken place to the degree that reformist political sectors were as likely as the political right to seek support within the military and to endorse the repression of "radical" political alternatives in order to further their own agenda. The perception that the military can simply be equated with the forces of reaction or repression and the civilian "opposition" with fundamental democratic and economic reforms, will be shown to be a false evaluation. Rather, what is most striking about this period is the extent to which the military - civilian distinction among "progressive sectors" began to blur as the rapid industrialization of the urban capital occurred. The nationalistic revolutionary agenda and the nationalistic reform agenda became antithetical rather than complementary, as economic expansion strengthened the cause of the reformers over the revolutionaries. To disregard or understate these two dimensions, while attributing the "evils" of Guatemalan society to the oligarchy and the military (or the role of the U.S.), is to overlook the most important dynamic underlying the military as an electoral entity throughout the 1970s. This dynamic involves the collusion of important civilian sectors in which the extreme political right (as an expression of the land - owning oligarchy) was to have only a subordinate role.

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[273] See Edelberto Torres - Rivas, "El golpe militar de marzo de 1963," Polémica. 4 - 5 (Octubre, 1982) p. 35 - 39, NACLA (1974), George Black et. al. (1984), and Susanne Jonas (1991).

The Political Effects of the Central American Common Market

As observed at the end of the last chapter, the urban Ladino modernization agenda was in trouble by the 1960s due to depressed coffee prices and U.S. reservations over continuing economic aid grants to the Ydígoras administration. This economic plight brought about the rapid finalizing of an agreement to establish a "common market" among the Central American countries, put into effect with the signing of treaties at the end of 1960. Ydígoras was not to benefit politically from this economic diversification and industrial expansion strategy initiated under his regime, but successive administrations noticeably expanded on its possibilities. The CACM has been the object of numerous critiques, most stressing its structural limitations and partial breakdown by 1969 with the war between Honduras and El Salvador.[274] From a Guatemalan perspective what has remained unexamined in this more "regional" critique of the CACM are the profound political and economic changes for the specific urban - political environment of the capital, due to Guatemala "benefiting" disproportionately (versus other Central American countries) from the economic activity sparked by the creation of this common market. In no way does this diminish the strength of the existing critiques about the creation and functioning of the CACM. I only suggest that the effects of the CACM varied significantly from country to country.

The criticisms directed against the CACM were formulated at two distinct levels, one questioning the extent to which a Central American "common market" could be an expected panacea (expansion of the consumer market) when no socio - economic or structural changes (particularly land reform) were pursued in an effort to improve the purchasing power of the impoverished majority. Thus from a more "economistic" Marxist perspective, the CACM from its inception was viewed as a severely flawed economic strategy both theoretically and in practice as it could never resolve the poverty and societal contradictions of the region. A second level of critique from the "class - dependency" perspective more closely examined how the U.S.

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[274] See Susanne Jonas, "Masterminding the Mini - Market," in NACLA, (1974). Edelberto Torres - Rivas, "The Central American Model of Growth: Crisis for Whom?" in Revolution In Central America. ed. SCAAN (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983) p. 140 - 153. Victor Bulmer - Thomas, The Political Economy of Central America Since 1920. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Carlos M. Vilas, Between Earthquakes and Volcanoes. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1995).

inserted itself into what was supposed to be a regional and "protectionist" economic strategy. It was common knowledge that the U.S. viewed the creation of regional trading blocs with suspicion and hostility as these "common markets" potentially restricted or rejected the participation of U.S. capital while protecting regional producers against imported capital and consumer goods. Hence, just prior to the formalizing of the CACM statutes to establish a regional regulatory / planning bureaucracy, the U.S. underwrote a substantial part of the project by providing the majority of financial funds for the regional development bank (some 100 million dollars which was equal to half of the finance capital).[275]

Such U.S. "beneficence" necessarily entailed concessions to the future operations of U.S. capital in the region. This undermined the authority of CACM regulators / planners as individual nations overrode CACM decisions in permitting the operation of U.S. capital in their nations. Consequently, the disequilibrium inherent in the CACM strategy was exacerbated by the fact that U.S. capital could operate freely (even subsidized by the new regional bank) leading to the duplication of industries / services and a bias in favor of "low risk" U.S. capital sources (versus local). Any potentially negative effects of the CACM to U.S. capital were thus "rectified" as even the limited potential benefits to the region, i.e. the creation of an independent and "nationalistic" bourgeoisie, were significantly altered in favor of external sources and their participation. The CACM was "bought off" by the U.S., undermining the possibilities for a more united and complementary regional economic union.

Previously unheard of amounts of U.S. capital (private / public) began to enter the region in a largely unregulated economic context. Due to this unregulated environment, U.S. capital heavily concentrated itself in Guatemala (and to a lesser extent in El Salvador) versus the other Central American countries. As documented in the last chapter, urban Ladino political forces had advanced an extensive development agenda (as a continuation of the 1944 - 54 period), limited in the past by having only minimal access to sources of capital from which to proceed with this agenda. Nevertheless, it was due to this level of "modernization" (highways, ports, urban infrastructure, electrification) that Guatemala became a preferred site for foreign investment and CACM funds by the early 1960s. It is the political ramifications of this Guatemalan "advantage" that will be examined in this section.

The CACM, in conjunction with investment capital from U.S. corporations, had a profound effect on the Ladino political sphere because of where this capital operated within Guatemala and the manner in which it was utilized. Although it may be observed that this capital only served to perpetuate the subordination of the Guatemalan economy to foreign interests, its operation in this period was fundamentally different from the way foreign capital had previously operated in the country (notably UFCo, IRCA, and Empresa Eléctrica). Prior to the CACM, U.S. capital had initiated and fully monopolized specific industries, infrastructure or services in the country (whether bananas, electricity, communications, railroads). As a result their activities were conditioned on there not being any domestic or foreign competition with their business activities. In addition, and despite the contempt broadly held for them by Ladino Guatemalans, these foreign companies had little direct effect on the bulk of the population. The lucrative banana industry, though important to the state for export taxes, had emerged in lowland regions (Izabal, Escuintla) where previously no production had taken place. Relative to the numbers of people involved in the coffee, cotton, sugar cane, and domestic foodstuffs, the numbers in the banana industry were very low (and better paid to attract workers).[276] The railway and shipping monopoly of UFCo / IRCA had been broken by the late 1950s, ending the high costs of transportation and the preferential shipping practices of UFCo that had been the main reasons for the "anti - U.S." nationalistic politics across most Ladino social sectors. The profits amassed by these U.S. companies further agitated Ladino sectors given the unwillingness of these companies to reinvest and improve services (which was most apparent in the ongoing dispute with Empresa Eléctrica and IRCA). Importantly, though, the activities of these companies were remote from the politically - charged atmosphere of the capital. Although other foreign corporations had shown an interest in the resource rich El Petén and the northern regions of Alta Verapaz during the Armas regime, the inaccessibility of these regions made the exploration for oil and minerals unprofitable and government concessions were allowed to lapse. Again, these failed extractive efforts were located far from the capital, the important Ladino agro - export regions, and the densely populated Maya highlands. Relative to the domestic economy (of which the coffee industry was paramount) as of 1960 foreign corporations had not played a role in restructuring labor - land relations in either the rural or urban environment, preferring instead to monopolize production in profitable enclaves without altering the labor relations or land tenure where the majority resided.

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[275] Susanne Jonas, "Masterminding the Mini - Market," in NACLA, (1974) p. 88 - 89.

Prior to the 1960s, the most important sources of capital within the country were land and foreign - owned infrastructure. While the former still prevailed as the most important source of "wealth" for Ladinos and Maya alike, the latter was surrendering to state - directed infrastructure development. As observed, foreign interests had been active in remote and under - populated regions, but their direct control over the most important forms of modern infrastructure had led to considerable discontent and envy amongst several Ladino sectors who were then "dependent" on these foreign interests for their services. Nevertheless, despite a persistent and prevalent "anti-U.S." sentiment expressed in the capital, an "expropriationist" agenda had not emerged even during the 1944-54 period. Ladino political forces, during and after the 1944-54 period, had gradually broken the hold of foreign monopoly capital within Guatemala. This urban Ladino "nationalism," though, had never contemplated the outright expropriation of U.S. interests. Even the Guatemalan unions of these foreign interests, at their most radical stage between 1944-54, never advocated a strategy that called for national - worker control over foreign interests. In concert with the urban Ladino middle class demands, unions had focused on higher wages and better working conditions, thus advancing an agenda that sought to retain a larger percentage of U.S. profits (through taxes and wages) within the country. Under Ydígoras these nationalistic sentiments had again become pronounced within the capital (and within Ydígoras's own administration) as depressed coffee prices severely crippled the ongoing state - directed development that had continued unabated since Arévalo was president. The difference at this time was that the nationalistic target was the U.S. government for not being forthcoming with aid / grants and preferential trade measures during a period of severe economic stress effecting middle and upper class Ladinos. The role of U.S. monopoly capital was rapidly diminishing in Guatemala, and the demands within the Ladino nationalistic discourse reflected this change.

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[276] UFCo banana production on Guatemalan lands was in decline in this period, and the company involved in a hostile dispute with IRCA shareholders. Gradually lands were given over to domestic producers with UFCo monopolizing the selling and shipping from Guatemalan producers.

It may be observed that the traditional "nationalism" professed by the urban middle classes had never desired the outright expropriation of U.S. corporate interests, but the ability to control, regulate, and compete against these foreign interests (as documented in preceding chapters). Historically then, U.S. corporate interests were more symbolically antagonistic as an issue of compromised national sovereignty rather than of real direct plunder as their activities were of little significance to the living conditions of most Guatemalans (when the Maya majority is accounted for). Ironically, Guatemalan unions within these U.S. corporations were far stronger than unions in any other sector of the economy. In the agro - export sector union activity was non-existent except on the very largest coffee fincas (and the majority of these were state - owned and operated). Up until 1960 then, very little U.S. investment had gone into expanding the manufacturing sector in the capital (which was dominated by small local producers and the larger beverage and concrete industries) or had impinged upon the dominant coffee industry. Ladino nationalism had imposed new demands and conditions on the existing foreign control of national infrastructure (conditions that these monopolistic interests were not accustomed to having to contend with), giving way in the end to Guatemalan state development initiatives.[277]

After the formation of the CACM backed by U.S. banking capital, the implementation of the Alliance for Progress, and the movement of U.S. manufacturing capital towards the isthmus, the region generally saw the movement of unprecedented levels of foreign capital to finance the areas of industrial enterprises, infrastructure i.e. roads, water, sewage systems (rural / urban) and agricultural development / diversification.[278] While in terms of social classes and participating nations these monies were distributed unequally, in Guatemala these funds disproportionately became concentrated / utilized for the industrialization of the capital city (over rural development or support for the small land holding majority). Versus other Central American nations, Guatemala was to "enjoy" a larger take of the available funds due to the weak regulatory abilities of the regional bureaucracy of the CACM. It is important to note that this "preference" to invest in Guatemala (and specifically Guatemala City) lay in the fact that since 1944 state - directed development had overcome a number of barriers to the industrialization of the capital, namely the building of highways, ports, urban infrastructure and increasing electrical output. Had this not occurred, Guatemala City would have been the least attractive center in the region for finance capital (next to Honduras) as the U.S. - monopolized road, port, train and electrical systems that prevailed until the 1940s would not have made urban industrialization feasible. Due to this infrastuctural change since 1944, Guatemala City became an extremely attractive center where industrial enterprises were to become established (selling either in Guatemala, the CACM or exporting to the U.S. and Europe). Thus Guatemala underwent a dramatic transformation after 1960 in which high levels of finance capital (or "risk" capital) began to enter what was, as documented, a highly politicized and volatile urban environment. This type of investment capital, not being based on the security and status of land ownership, was to significantly alter the boundaries of national (hence Ladino) debate and urban class conflict.

The massive infusion of finance capital into Guatemala City served to radically separate the two main Ladino middle class positions that until this time had remained tenuously united by a nationalistic and "anti - U.S." discourse. The larger and more powerful middle class sector (small business and industrialists, some unions, professionals, technocracy - bureaucracy which included a majority of the military's officer class) welcomed this "opportunity" as it involved a partnership between domestic and foreign capital in industrial enterprises (rather than just foreign monopolization) and the government had greater access to capital sources for a diverse array of state development initiatives, thus dampening (but not eradicating) the "nationalistic" concerns of this sector. This broader access to sources of capital was to establish this middle class sector on a stronger footing vis - a - vis the rural oligarchy (and the political right wing) and the urban political left, raising a number of its representatives from simply petty bourgeois status to a true bourgeois faction (with all its inherent contradictions) intimately tied to the state, and including military officers and sectors of the bureaucracy. The continuing numerical weakness of this civilian sector led to a heavy reliance on the military as the instrument to define and advance this particular set of interests.[279]

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[277] The U.S. private monopolies on railroads, electricity and communications were to collapse during the early 1960s due to a combination of public and private initiatives. The railroad was undermined by a dynamic trucking industry being created (due to new highways and ports) while electricity and communications were to become dominated by government development agencies.

[278] The last emphasized increasing levels of production for various sized landholdings without altering the existing landholding structure. Although "land reform" had been a part of the Alliance For Progress agenda (the model even being Arbenz's land reform policies) the political will existed neither in the U.S. nor in the countries receiving funds / aid to act on this proposal.

The weaker middle class sector (university, students, teachers, small sector of urban labor and small business) leaned towards establishing more progressive social programs (including land reform) to resolve persistent social problems rather than just capital intensive industrialization. This sector increasingly became divided itself as university intellectuals, students, and later "rebel" military officers, began to openly endorse a revolutionary solution (in light of the Cuban Revolution in 1959) over an electoral strategy of coalition building and gradualist reforms. The political events and economic changes that reveal the distinctions between these class factions I have just outlined were clearly expressed in the latter stages of the Ydígoras administration, during the military dictatorship of Peralta Azurdia, and the civilian administration of Méndez Montenegro. It is also during this "capitalization of the capital" that we may determine the roots of "la violencia" and the limited force of Guatemala's political "left."

The Collapse of Ydígoras and the Contradictions of a Nationalist Coalition

As was observed at the end of the last chapter, Ydígoras was attempting to hold together a highly unstable and contradictory set of political forces in the midst of a severe economic recession (due to world coffee prices) that jeopardized the modernization agenda intended to transform the country. His political stability during this economic crisis stemmed from a continuing degree of military "loyalty" and to the fact that the political center - left and right were each more divided than the coalition Ydígoras held together (comprised of three different political parties). Given this matrix of political forces, it was the persistent economic downturn that was to most affect the stability of his regime, leading eventually to a military dictatorship. As state spending was gradually reduced, urban middle class supporters of Ydígoras gradually moved into more critical political camps giving rise to a plethora of political alternatives. This political fragmentation occurred much more rapidly than the economic diversification pursued by the administration even though Ydígoras oversaw the implementation of a broad industrial strategy.

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[279] As may be noted here, I am openly contesting the view that the rural oligarchy simply gave the military a "piece of its pie" to ensure its loyalty and the view that in Guatemala there is but an oligarchic - military - U.S. allince versus an "impoverished majority" (and hence no "middle class" to speak of).

Throughout 1959 the economy declined as coffee prices (and then coffee production) gradually decreased. As coffee still accounted for some 70 - 80% of export earnings, this had a major impact on the ability of the government to finance its activities. Ydígoras thus struck the already economically insecure middle and working class by proposing to reduce all government salaries by 10 - 14%.[280] The other major export earner, bananas, also suffered a major downturn when weather conditions reduced that years exports by 15%. Although the fledgling cotton and sugar cane crops were undergoing a dramatic expansion in amounts produced, together they did little to compensate for the decline in state revenues associated with the coffee and banana industries. Increasingly the Ydígoras regime criticized the U.S. for its economic problems, expressing its disappointment that the U.S. was not forthcoming with aid monies.[281] Towards the end of 1959 the economy was still facing extreme problems. In an effort to counteract these trends, Ydígoras introduced taxes and duties to protect local producers and to increase the consumption of domestic goods.

> President Ydígoras Fuentes was alarmed by the increasingly unfavorable balance of trade brought about by rising imports and the simultaneous decline in the price of coffee, Guatemala's leading export. In an attempt to stem the outflow of government reserves, he announced the following economic measures: an increase of 20% in import taxes on about 600 articles termed "luxury" items by the administration; and outright prohibition on the importation of some 90 items produced locally; and the cancellation of import tax exemptions granted during 1959 for textiles and textile products. In addition, the government ruled that import expenditures must be used for the purchase of basic necessities or for the acquisition of capital goods required in Guatemala's program of economic development.[282]

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[280] HAR, 12 (1959) p. 14 - 15.
[281] HAR, 12 (1959) p. 424.
[282] HAR, 12 (1959) p. 592 - 593.

In many ways these measures did not vary from policies during the 1944-54 period, the main difference being that they were undertaken in a period of severe economic stress. It was also under such conditions that the CACM was to be rapidly formalized and initiated.

On the surface, these conditions appear favorable for either the weaker middle class sector to advance its more reformist political agenda, given the mounting failure of Ydígoras and the extreme fragmentation of the political right, or for a more radical alternative to become developed. With respect to the reformist alternative led by the Revolutionary Party (PR), serious divisions were emerging as the PR leader, Mario Méndez Montenegro, refused to give up the party leadership after failing to win the 1958 election. Further tensions stemmed from the PR's support for the Ydígoras coalition on several issues, leading some to believe that the party lacked a clearly defined ideological agenda while it muzzled or expelled more radical elements of the party. The PR leadership in this period obviously sought to draw eventual support from those middle class sectors that had supported Ydígoras, rather than advancing an agenda based exclusively around the urban unions and lower urban classes. As a result, the PR was to suffer several divisions rather than increased unity and support in this economic atmosphere. As for a more radical alternative, none had evolved despite a more open political environment (the Guatemalan Worker's Party, or PGT, being active) and the "legacy" of the 1944-54 period (the PR claiming to be the heirs of the revolutionary decade). Such divisions in the political left led to Ydígoras increasing his support in the National Assembly in elections at the end of 1959 (half the seats being up for election).[283] With a strengthened majority in the National Assembly, Ydígoras was able to institute even more severe austerity measures against the government bureaucracy, laying off employees and cutting wages. By this time the government was in arrears in a number of areas such as the funding of the university and payrolls to teachers and other government sectors.

By early 1960 the capital had become extremely tense. All opposition (whether left or right) and the press were critical of Ydígoras for mismanagement and corruption related to defaulting on wages / funding and the severe austerity measures, in comparison to the extravagance and graft among top officials and Ydígoras's coterie.[284] This led to a series of strikes and demonstrations by different sectors, beginning with a major strike in January by employees of the Guatemalan Institute of Social Security supported by the PR, the Association of University Students and "various workers' groups."[285] Ydígoras's directive to expel the hunger strikers from government buildings led to a sympathy strike by municipal employees, bus drivers, and railroad workers. "Law students and unionists led protest meetings, which were dispersed with tear gas, until on January 23 Ydígoras Fuentes announced that a reconciliation had been achieved."[286] Despite Ydígoras backing down on this dispute, his administration proceeded with austerity measures which included reduced departmental spending, wage and job cuts.[287] Ydígoras used this urban unrest as a pretext to attack the policies of the PR while attempting to solidify support through a coalition with the right - wing MDN. This provoked a severe division within the MDN between pro- and anti-Ydígoras forces (the latter forming the infamous National Liberation Movement or MLN). Ydígoras responded by arresting and censoring both the left and the right, then putting forward a most bizarre proposition:

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[283] HAR, 12 (1959) p. 653.

[284] Ydígoras had a salary of $15,000 (U.S.) a month and the press had documented numerous scandals involving the "give aways" of state lands (notably the expropriated German coffee fincas) to friends and associates. These were purely "civilian" failings as no evidence linked the involvement of top military officials or the military as an institution to these scandals.

> The Guatemalan political scene was marred in April by a series of arrests, the most notable being that of Luis David Eskenassy, leader of the *intransigente* (anti - administration) wing of the rightist Movimiento Democratico Nacionalista. The official reason given for Eskenassy's arrest was his part in an alleged plot against the government in July 1959, in which Communists from outside the country were supposed to have cooperated with anti-Communists and some militarists within it. It was even said that this unlikely group of conspirators had reason to expect that the United States Embassy would support the movement. Even as a fabrication the story was fantastic, and the accusation against the United States, probably intended for home consumption only, was a nasty bite for the administration of President Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes to give to the hand which had recently been feeding it with loans to offset the current economic crisis.[288]

This was to be the hallmark of Ydígoras's regime; "communists" were blamed for political instability while the U.S. was blamed for persistent economic problems. In reality, the most powerful forces that were to destabilize the regime came from solidly "anti - communist" sectors.

With a cash - strapped administration and no imminent resurgence in coffee prices, the industrialization strategy contained within the CACM became an important alternative in diversifying and stabilizing the national economy. In February of 1960 the basis for the CACM was established between Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala; additional protocols were signed in June (Nicaragua refrained until December when certain conditions were met to accommodate Nicaragua's weakness versus El Salvador and Guatemala; Costa Rica did not join until 1963), and then in December the General Treaty of Central American Economic Integration went into effect. There were two important dimensions to the CACM, one being a regional planning and financing bureaucracy created under CACM protocols, and the other being a general reduction in tariffs / duties to permit a freer exchange of consumer and capital goods within the isthmus. The first was largely underwritten by U.S. capital through the Inter - American Development Bank. The second was to favor the industrial sectors of El Salvador (notably San Salvador) and Guatemala (Guatemala City) over Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica due to the former nations having an existing infrastructure more conducive to an industrialization process and thus being immediately more attractive for U.S. corporate capital.

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[285] HAR, 13 (1960) p. 14.
[286] Ibid., p. 15.
[287] Ibid., p. 15 - 16.
[288] HAR, 13 (1960) p. 228 - 229.

During the finalizing of the CACM, austerity measures against government employees, set to go into effect in July of 1960, fomented vocal opposition from legislators, judiciary, and teachers. Confronted with continuing urban unrest, Ydígoras instituted a "state of siege" in July following a persistent bombing spree in the capital that eventually culminated in several deaths within a theater. Reduced to a "state of alarm" in September, and then lifted in October, this phase of executive rule was observed at the time to have been a failure.

> An unsigned article in El Imparcial, among others in different newspapers, commented that the events which had led the government to decree both the state of siege and of alarm resulted in a "sad waste of time considering especially the numerous and complex economic problems Guatemala now encounters. Besides the waste of time, the people's confidence in the government suffered considerably, and now it remains for both the government and the citizens to avoid political and social agitation."[289]

In an attempt to force party unity, the National Assembly raised the legal registration number to 10,000 members (10% literate) at a time when there was eleven registered parties and five awaiting registration. By November there were still ten parties registered under the new law and a dissident wing from Ydígoras's coalition formed the Democratic Union Party (PUD).

To add to the political instability and urban unrest, nationalist sentiments were agitated when it was revealed publicly that on a private finca Ydígoras and his closest associates were allowing the training of Cuban exiles (for the Bay of Pigs). Later it was revealed that U.S. officers had also been granted authority over a military base in conjunction with these training activities. Such blatant U.S. - sponsored military activity on Guatemalan territory infuriated sectors of the military officer class, and on November 13 Ydígoras faced a major military revolt by junior officers against his government from within the capital.[290] This revolt would only have been recognized as one in a series of political problems faced by Ydígoras, had not several of these junior officers been able to flee to Honduras, then initiating Guatemala's first guerrilla movement.[291] The revolt lasted four days before pro-government military sectors finally restored order. This revolt came from solidly "anti - communist" sectors, and as Poitevin observes, these officers strongly identified with the urban middle class sectors most affected by the austerity measures, corruption and economic decline under the Ydígoras regime.[292] The military was then put in a difficult position as support for Ydígoras generated discontent within the military, while military condemnation would have simply hastened the collapse of the regime with no viable civilian alternative to replace Ydígoras's administration.

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[289] HAR, 13 (1960), p. 678.

[290] See the weekly Política, (Mexico City) from 1960 for an excellent account of this period.

Throughout 1961 the political instability persisted as Ydígoras and his coalition came under further attack from both the left and the right. Early in the year this opposition was united against Ydígoras's efforts to increase taxes and to introduce an income tax system. Ydígoras's position was further weakened when the PUD officially broke with the government coalition, leaving Ydígoras with a minority in the National Assembly (later in the year the PUD would reunite to contest assembly elections in December). Tensions in the capital were exacerbated by increased demonstrations by the Association of University Students who firmly upheld a pro - Cuba / anti - U.S. position in light of Guatemala's role in the failed Bay of Pigs invasion (April, 1961). Continuous conflicts took place in the capital between pro- and anti - Castro organizations (only small numbers involved). Then in July, Ydígoras re-instituted a "state of siege" after an arsenal of arms was discovered in the capital, supposedly to be used in a coup. The low credibility of Ydígoras led some to argue that this plot was all a government fabrication, but Ydígoras used it as a pretext to jail and exile opposition figures from both the left and right.[293] Ydígoras only added to his lack of credibility by blaming all the political problems in Guatemala on the Cuban government, including the opposition from the right.

> In a possible preliminary for future action, President Ydígoras Fuentes launched another attack on Cuba's alleged interference in Guatemala's internal affairs. The vitriolic President claimed that Castro money had bought off the extreme left and extreme right in his country and was in large measure responsible for recent disturbances. He went on to say that Guatemalan student and labor leaders were constantly traveling to Cuba by way of Mexico to receive "money and instructions."[294]

In this atmosphere, the election for the other half of the National Assembly in December of 1961 led to a major "legitimacy crisis" in the capital. Ydígoras's coalition claimed victory over 25 of the 33 contested seats giving Ydígoras a decisive majority in the Assembly (50 of 66 seats). Denounced as fraudulent, this election result served to temporarily unite the left and right against Ydígoras's coalition.

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[291] A detailed discussion of the guerrilla movement dating from this incident will be undertaken in a later section of this chapter.

[292] R. Poitevin, (1977) p. 180.

[293] This included the leaders of the PR and the MLN, and also such 1954 "liberationist" figures as Colonel Ernesto Niederheitman and Juan Córdova Cerna.

[294] HAR, 14 (1961) p. 779.

By the end of January, 1962, another "state of siege" was declared by Ydígoras after a police officer was killed. Hundreds of people were temporarily jailed and 15 prominent leaders (including Mario Méndez Montenegro and Mario Sandoval Alarcón) were expelled from the country. As usual, Ydígoras blamed Cuba for this political instability. Then in March the capital erupted into broad - based and prolonged anti-government demonstrations, led by the Association of University Students.

> Most of the anti - government activity took place in the capital. The influential student organization Asociacion de Estudiantes Universitarios (AEU) organized protest speeches, marches, and strikes against the new Congress which began sessions on March 1. A terse AEU manifesto accused the Ydígoras Fuentes government of perpetrating a fraud in the December 1961 elections, and demanded the dissolution of Congress. On March 9, the AEU called an hour - long protest strike which was successful in spite of the early morning arrest of student leaders. The strike was supported by municipal employees as well as by some 5,000 secondary pupils under the leadership of the Frente Unido del Estudiantado Guatemalteco Organizado (FUEGO). The demonstrators tied up traffic, caused some property damage, and retired after city police directed a few well - aimed blows at demonstrators' heads. Public school teachers, who form the Frente Unido del Magisterio Nacional (FUMN), also announced their solidarity with the AEU.
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> President Ydígoras Fuentes and the military responded vigorously. An 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew was imposed. After it became apparent that verbal warnings would not dissuade the students, the military and the feared secret police resorted to more forceful means of persuasion. Several thousand farm laborers loyal to the government were called in to crack a few skulls. Railroad union leaders were arrested. Ydígoras Fuentes decreed the militarization of the privately - owned International Railways of Central America (IRCA). As sympathy strikes spread, the Army took over most of the capital city, including its public transportation, electric services, and telegraph system.[295]

The opposition parties sided with the demonstrators in demanding the resignation of Ydígoras and at a minimum, his replacement by a military junta.

> After arresting several leaders of the rightist Movimiento Liberación Nacional (MLN) and the Catholic Party Democracia Cristiana Guatemalteca (DCG), the President met with them to try to reach an "understanding" among the non - Communist parties. His attempts were rejected. Instead the MLN, DCG, and the moderate left - wing Partido Revolucionario (PR) joined with students, representatives of the University of San Carlos, unions, commerce, and professional organizations in drawing up a manifesto demanding Ydígoras Fuentes'

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[295] HAR, 15 (1962) p. 210 - 211.

> resignation. The declaration sought his replacement by a military junta which would effect a return to stability and constitutionality.[296]

By late in March much of the earlier momentum of the anti-government movement had been lost but not before several important sectors had expressed their desire to see Ydígoras removed by whatever means. This included a strike by commercial businesses in the capital despite the threat of having their licenses canceled. It is clear at this point that the military was in a very uncomfortable position, left with a totally discredited National Assembly as the only major institution supporting Ydígoras. Ydígoras's own coalition took an additional blow when the PUD officially withdrew its support, protesting "administrative corruption, personal rule, the lack of a government program, and the administration's failure to resolve basic economic problems."[297] By the end of March, order had been restored but not before some 25 people had been killed, 500 wounded and over 1000 arrested.

Then in April a clash between students and soldiers (that left four students dead) reopened the dispute with the government.[298] The opposition political parties (MLN, PR, Christian Democrats, PUD) proposed that Ydígoras resign, turning the presidency over to the vice - president, then holding a plebiscite as to whether or not Ydígoras should permanently resign. The AEU attempted to forge a broader civilian coalition in the capital with a position distinct from that of the opposition parties and business sectors, proposing "the immediate establishment of a coalition government which would guarantee human rights and would nullify the December congressional elections. The students were supported by a group made up of civic, student, worker, teacher, and political organizations called the Frente Civico Nacional."[299] Despite this broad support in the capital for the removal of Ydígoras, the representatives from the rural countryside and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church voiced an opposing position.

> Leaders of some 300 municipalities, meeting in Antigua, declared their support for the government, as did a rural labor organization of Tiquisate in the name of all the "free unions" [sic] of Guatemala. The Archbishop of Guatemala City, Mariano Rossell Arellano, called upon all Catholics to respect the legally constituted authority.[300]

In a partial response to the demands of the anti - government forces, a new provisional cabinet was formed. With the exception of the foreign minister, all civilians had been replaced by military officers. Obviously this military "intervention," while maintaining the veneer of civilian rule, was an effort to impart an image of administrative responsibility and an effort to end corruption, favoritism and administrative incompetence that had accompanied the economic depression.[301] Alternately, the "anti - government" forces were comprised of diverse ideological tendencies that had emerged but remained strictly contained within the capital. Though unified in their opposition to Ydígoras they had no unified and defined program, and represented highly diverse and incompatible political - economic positions (radical student groups, moderate student groups, teachers, political parties, small business, bureaucracy, commerce, professionals, rural oligarchs). Additionally, without the overt support of the military any combination of these various political tendencies lacked the power to alter or advance a specific political agenda.

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[296] Ibid., p. 211. It is clear that this was the minimum condition these disparate interests could agree on, the AEU and its supporters calling for a more drastic restructuring of government and economic policy.

[297] Ibid., p. 212 - 213.

[298] HAR, 15 (1962), p. 306 - 307.

[299] Ibid., p. 307.

[300] Ibid., p. 307 - 308.

The Return of Arévalo: National Savior or Political Opportunist?

Within the "class - dependency" perspective these "popular class" protests of 1962 are understood as the defining moment of a broader project with more radical initiatives i.e. guerrilla struggle, whose momentum was only truncated by the military dictatorship of March 1963. It is argued that the "popular classes" reemerged with considerable strength in the 1962-63 period to advance a reformist project through the reelection of Juan José Arévalo, and that the military dictatorship of Peralta Azurdia was the reaction by the military - U.S. - oligarchy to this "popular class" threat of inaugurating a broad based and popularly supported reformist project. Despite that this "popular class" categorization, given the historical evidence, does not represent any participation by the rural Maya majority, there still remains the fact that Guatemala's Ladino politics in this period cannot be so neatly packaged and delineated. Of all the political forces active in this time period, certainly the coalition led by the AEU had the best developed agenda versus other forms of political opposition, even if the support from its constituents were restricted to the capital.[302] The momentum of the AEU was to be short lived, and by May of 1962 political calm had returned to the capital.

> Three weeks later students had returned to their schools, the military control of public services had ended, and the four - month state of siege had been lifted. Observers attributed the return of relative calm to the students' realization that they could not force the

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[301] At this point the military was still publicly untarnished (except with the AEU), having refused several opportunities to take over the government while not exercising excessive force / violence in dealing with the opposition (the police being more visibly responsible for the repression in the capital).

[302] See CIDOC, Guatemala: La Violencia (Part 1). Dossier No. 19, (Cuernavaca: 1968) specifically the AEU manifesto "al pueblo de Guatemala, hace saber," p. 4 / 13, and Clemente Marroquín Rojas, "Sólo los estudiantes han tenido un programa," p. 4 / 53.

> resignation of Ydígoras by striking, and to the increased role of the military in the executive branch of the government.[303]

Furthermore, the Arévalo "threat," rather than uniting urban political forces of the left and center, will be shown to have increased the fragmentation which was expressed most evidently by the division and collapse of Yídgoras's coalition.

In the post- "uprising" era of 1962, and in the face of the presidential election campaign, in which Juan José Arévalo had stated his intention to return to the country to compete, the political scene was a myriad of political parties in which extreme fragmentation was taking place on the left, center and right. Shortly after the "uprising" Ydígoras's coalition openly displayed its contradictory composition when nearly half of the assembly members in Ydígoras's Reconciliation Party and in the PUD declared their support for Juan José Arévalo while the rest threw their support behind Juan Córdova Cerna.[304] In addition, and despite individual National Assembly members declaring support for Arévalo's candidacy, the directorates of the registered parties refused to endorse Arévalo's candidacy. By June it was reported that there were some 20 aspirants for the presidency and the PR, led by Mario Méndez Montenegro, were working to build a broad coalition among the principal opposition parties in an effort to prevent Arévalo from using any of the major parties as a vehicle to the presidency. By September two small parties, the Orthodox Revolutionary Party (PRO) and the National Revolution Party of 1944 (PNR-44), had been organized to support the candidacy of Arévalo for president.[305] Arévalo was not the instant "hit" that many had foreseen, even after the PUD threw its weight behind these two parties. "The newly - formed Partido Revolutionario Ortodoxo sponsored a rally in Guatemala City for its presidential candidate, Juan José Arévalo. Only two thousand persons were in evidence, prompting political observers to question Arévalo's strength as a contender for the Presidency in 1964."[306] The AEU, being more nationalistic and radical in its agenda, was distancing itself from Arévalo. Arévalo himself had added to this division and skepticism by openly condemning the Cuban Revolution and throwing his support behind the U.S. Alliance for Progress program, prophesying that the "Harvard educated" Kennedy administration represented a "new era" in U.S. - Latin American relations. Consequently in the eyes of certain Ladino sectors (AEU), Arévalo had betrayed both his supposed "revolutionary" and "nationalistic" credentials while the main political parties (left and center) that may have been more disposed to this position, were firmly committed to electing their own presidential candidates. What made Arévalo a larger "threat" than he was, was Ydígoras' orchestrated gambit as to whether or not he would allow Arevalo to return to the country, a threat by Ydígoras to force the unity of his former coalition behind his own favored presidential candidate, (not Juan Córdova Cerna but) the wealthy landowner Roberto Alejos.

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[303] HAR, 15 (1962), p. 402.

[304] Ibid., p. 402.

[305] These parties called for a true agrarian reform, stronger trade unionism, more rapid industrialization, expanded education services, free political - religious expression, and an independent foreign policy. HAR, 15 (1962) p. 794. It is not clear to what extent Arévalo would have endorsed these ends.

[306] Ibid., p. 892.

Although it has been posited by the "class - dependency" perspective that a combination of popular class activity (in support of Arévalo) and rural guerrilla activity ultimately brought about the military dictatorship, little attention is given to the political right and the military in this period (on the assumption that these sectors were securely represented by the Ydígoras administration).[307] The political right, despite being irreconcilably divided, played the more prominent role in perpetuating the instability in the capital. It was widely speculated that throughout 1961 and 1962 the political right had initiated the bombing spree in the capital, targeting government buildings, radio stations and opponents of all persuasions (including on the "right" itself). These activities served to destabilize the civilian regime even further, bringing about the types of repression and censorship that Ydígoras would unfailingly utilize against a perceived "Cuban conspiracy" (thus further undermining his own credibility). Then at the end of November in 1962, a bizarre coalition of officers from within the airforce launched an attack on Ydígoras's presidential home and against police / army posts within the capital. Led by what was considered a "right - wing" group of officers (mostly retired), it was also observed that "Arevalistas" were involved (the brother of Juan José Arévalo being one of the principal conspirators). Pitched battles with the army lasted only a few hours (4 civilians killed and 50 wounded), but in the end the entire air force was put under arrest by the army. Though the motives for this rebellion were never determined, it was clear that the military was undergoing a process of continued and unresolvable fragmentation (beginning with the events of November, 1960) in the same way as the civilian political sphere.

By January of 1963 a severe economic crisis had set in and the Ydígoras administration was forced to resort to extreme measures to counter the economic decline.

> Pushed to the fiscal edge by 1962's worse than usual year - end financial crisis and the poor coffee market, the Guatemalan Government felt its condition weakening during January, rather than improving, as had been expected. The continuing degeneration fostered

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[307] We have seen that there is only a limited truth to the idea of the "popular class" having a continuous momentum whether on its own or behind Arévalo. As will be demonstrated later, the reference to a "guerrilla movement" emerging in this period is a popular but mistaken assertion.

> increasingly strident counter measures, tinged with a hint of panic. The treasury began to rely more and more heavily on "emergency" taxation as a source of revenue, and popular indignation reached a fever pitch.[308]

In the face of proposed tax increases on property, petroleum products, alcohol, airports, stamps, and export taxes on cotton and citronella, the agricultural, industrial and commercial interests rebelled by refusing to pay the taxes and (in the case of agriculture) threatening to stop the planting and shipment of agro - export goods. Again we see the emergence of optimal conditions for a unified and reformist political alternative to assert a more radical alternative, particularly in light of broad urban contempt for Ydígoras and a shaken military institution. Rather than unity and a defined agenda, what could be termed the left and center - left, had totally fragmented. In November it had lost the important mayoralty election for Guatemala City as three "left" candidates split the vote, allowing a relatively unknown "radio personality" to become mayor. Fortunately the political right was afflicted with the same inability to organize and unite. By January there were some 25 individuals in competition, through various political parties, for the presidency. Politically and economically the country was in disarray, as reflected in press commentaries of the day.

> The apolitical election of disk jockey Francisco Montenegro Sierra to Guatemala City's mayorality in November, the candidacy of more than 25 individuals for the Presidency, and recent trends toward unconventional party coalitions implied, in the editorial eyes of the capital's two major newspapers, a weakening of the political system in Guatemala. The dailies El Imparcial and Prensa Libre, speaking of the parties' need for total reorganization, pointed to the nation's weariness of their repeated "poor and miserable" showing, "of so many forgotten promises, of the abject behavior of so many political figures to whom people and promises mean absolutely nothing." According to El Imparcial, political leaders must examine themselves closely and effect a number of changes in order to recapture the confidence of the people. "many people have the impression," the daily said, "that the political parties have lost prestige." The two newspapers appeared to reflect the majority public view that political movements were falling into the path of personalism; and, in more elite intellectual circles, this distress turned to despair at the probable extension of the tendency into the December 1963 presidential election campaign.[309]

In an effort to force some form of political unity within the existing array of parties, Ydígoras guaranteed Arévalo safe entry into the country. Prior to Arévalo returning to Guatemala though (on March 31), the capital city erupted once again exactly one year after the first "uprising," only this time the protests and confrontations in the capital lacked the focus and organization of the previous year. On March 25 Ydígoras declared a "state of siege."

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[308] HAR, 16 (1963), p. 23.

[309] HAR, 16 (1963), p. 21-22.

> In the early hours of Monday, March 25, with rioters, looters, and disorganized army and police officials - all dodging bomb blasts, bursts of gunfire, and Sherman tanks - in possession of the streets of Guatemala City, Ydígoras imposed a strict curfew and decreed a state of siege. By dawn the streets had been cleared and the Army was in control of the capital and its environs. All political activity was suspended.[310]

The military itself was in disarray and unsure of its internal strength as military "rebels" attacked military bases and cut telephone lines. Unable to trust the airforce, the army relied on personnel and planes brought in from Nicaragua to help restore order. Then on March 31, the same day that Arévalo held a press conference in Guatemala City, the military attacked the Presidential Palace, arrested Ydígoras and sent him into exile. On hearing of the coup, Arévalo himself fled to Mexico. The military dictatorship, headed by Colonel Peralta Azurdia, suspended the upcoming presidential elections and the activities of all political parties.

The military coup of 1963 has generally been understood as a "right - wing / U.S." reaction to the possibility of an Arévalo victory and/or combined guerrilla - popular class activity. Certainly Arévalo was a factor which Ydígoras unsuccessfully utilized to reconstruct a viable political coalition, but beneath these political figures lay an assortment of political and economic conditions that all contributed to extreme instability, uncertainty and insecurity. These conditions were all contrary to the type of stable economic climate necessary for the CACM initiative, Alliance for Progress funds, and foreign industrial co-investment. There was definitely broader societal support than simply the right - wing (or oligarchy) and the U.S. for the military coup, as it had been endorsed previously by several of the main parties representative of the strongest middle class sectors. Even Francisco Villagrán Kramer, leader of the social democratic Democratic Revolutionary Unity (URD) and temporarily exiled himself under Ydígoras, supported the coup arguing that "it had accomplished three fundamental URD goals - the resignation of Ydígoras, the dissolution of the 'corrupt' national Congress, and the suspension and promised revision of the constitution."[311] If Arévalo had posed a "threat," it was as much to the existing center and left political parties as it was to the political right. As the urban Ladino classes fragmented completely in the face of a persistent economic "crisis," this disintegration quickly became apparent within the ranks of the military's officer class. Arévalo was only a contributing factor to the divisions among the urban classes, of which the middle classes had become the most politically divided. Furthermore, it is impossible to talk about a viable "left" or "popular class" alternative. Despite all the reformist forces being concentrated in the capital, they were unable to construct an alternative coalition and common leadership under the most propitious of political - economic conditions (economic depression, disgraced government coalition, fragmented political right-wing, and a visibly weakened military institution).

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[310] Ibid., p. 238.

[311] Ibid., p. 337.

The Economic and Political Legacy of theYdígoras Regime

As observed initially in the last chapter, the Ydígoras regime was from its outset a highly unstable coalition comprised of upper and middle class urban sectors, a fraction of the oligarchy, new agro - export sectors, and the industrializing bureaucracy. Committed to national "reconciliation" and a more open democratic system, the coalition fell apart when confronted with a prolonged economic recession brought on by depressed coffee prices. The recession had a significant impact on the middle class as state revenues became in short supply, thus heightening the existing insecurities of this class. Within this persistent economic downturn though, specific middle class sectors became more securely established by several initiatives under the Ydígoras regime. In the agro - export sector of the day, those producers involved in cotton and sugar cane production underwent an incredible "boom" as the amounts exported and quantities of land put into production (along the lowlands of the Ladino south - west) increased exponentially from year to year (50% increase for cotton in the 1962-63 growing season alone).[312] The industrialization of the capital was also another area of rapid transformation.

> A study made by the Banco de Guatemala revealed that a sizable number of new industries had been established in the country in the last three years. Between March 1958 and December 1961, 210 factories capitalized at over $100,000 had begun operations in Guatemala. Total investment, largely in the consumer - goods industries, exceeded 60 million quetzales (1 quetzal = $1).[313]

In several areas, such as food processing, tires, plastics, and light consumer goods, Guatemala City was becoming the dominant center of production and export to the other Central American countries (a direct result of the CACM). Also under Ydígoras the National Institute for Electrification (INDE) was established, initiating an ambitious plan to build the facilities necessary to more than double Guatemala's electrical output. This clearly signaled the failure of the U.S. owned Empresa Eléctrica to fulfill Guatemala's demands for electrical - industrial expansion and the government's unwillingness to remain restricted by this foreign monopoly. Notwithstanding these initiatives, the rapid loss of coffee income had been too severe and protracted to be overcome in such a short time frame in order to mollify the contradictions of the Ydígoras coalition.

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[312] As numerous military officers and bureaucrats from the 1944-54 period were involved in these areas, this may help to explain both the enduring support for Ydígoras and the complexity / severity of the divisions under Ydígoras given that the state played a major role in fomenting these areas of production at the expense of urban services and employees.

[313] HAR, 15 (1962) p. 21.

It must be stressed that in spite of the numerous "states of siege" introduced, the urban bombing campaign, and the various "uprisings" (both civilian and military), we cannot characterize either the Ydígoras regime or the various middle and upper classes as advocates of "state violence" and repression (with the exception of the extreme right i.e. MLN). The national press and the political parties were particularly sensitive to reports of brutality or torture by police and security forces, vehemently condemning such practices and identifying the perpetrators (a resilience that would be lost by the late 1960s). Additionally, a large number of exiles from the 1944-54 period had been allowed to return, including top ranking officials who had been a part of Arbenz's cabinet. The press in this period was quite open, as witnessed by the continuous critiques of the Ydígoras administration, and at one point even a press debate between Víctor Manuel Gutiérrez and Clemente Marroquín Rojas over the issue of "communism"[314] Even though Ydígoras resorted to temporarily jailing or exiling his leading opponents, the regime brought in a remarkably open phase in light of the economic stress and the political instability that was generated from this condition. In this respect, and contrary to the "counter - revolutionary" thesis held by the class - dependency perspective, the period of the late 1950s and early 1960s in Guatemala stands in marked contrast to the brutal forms of repression and state violence that were to characterize the elected civilian administration of Julio Méndez Montenegro (1966-70). There is absolutely no political continuity in the post - 1954 period when one compares the period of 1954-63 with 1966-85. By 1966 the factors and forces underlying the violence that would take center stage after this date had changed significantly.

As documented, the Ladino political sphere (contained largely within the capital) was a highly contested arena. In this period, though, the strong "nationalist" sentiments expressed across the ideological spectrum began to lose some force as the traditional monopoly interests from the U.S. receded in the economy, nationally controlled infrastructure was gradually put in place, and the CACM industrialization process favored Guatemala. Although we may question the extent to which Guatemala was becoming extricated from its "dependent" or "imperialized" status, the nascent but rapidly emerging industrialization of Guatemala City (due to the availability of more sources of capital) began to placate the nationalist demands of certain urban / rural middle and upper class sectors. Unlike the previous monopolistic period, foreign capital and banking capital (through the CACM) began to complement and support the "modernization" aspirations of several new urban and rural sectors (small industry, new agro - exporters, government technocrats and planners, urban labor). The degree to which numerous urban sectors saw in J.F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress program a marked departure from the long tradition of U.S. imperialism also should not be underestimated .[315] It was the Peralta Azurdia dictatorship that was to radically restructure the political sphere to accommodate the demands of a rapidly industrializing urban center dominated by high - risk finance capital.

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[314] V. Gutiérrez, a peasant leader and PGT member under Arbenz. Strangely enough this debate came out after the Christian Democratic Party (very conservative in this period) issued a manifesto condemning "capitalism" and its resultant social inequalities, which Gutiérrez used to advance a deeper "marxist" thesis.

The Peralta Dictatorship (1963-66): Restructuring the Civilian Political Sphere

The three year military dictatorship headed by Colonel Peralta Azurdia clearly represented the disparate ideological tendencies within the larger middle class (urban and rural) of Guatemalan society. This was expressed through the socio - economic policies of the Peralta regime which encompassed several middle class concerns, including nationalistic (or protectionist) policies against foreign monopolistic capital in the economy, expansion of the CACM initiatives, a reduced reliance on U.S. economic aid, increased levels of state intervention in the economy, and state support for domestic industrializing forces (local capitalists and the technocracy).[316] In addition, the constitutional changes and electoral laws put in place by a supposedly illegitimate military dictatorship were to be some of the most enduring political guidelines in the history of this nation. Peralta thus "successfully" rectified what had been the preeminent political problem prior to the coup, namely the extreme political fragmentation among Ladino civilian political forces. This was the most pressing issue the military faced (as it also had a direct bearing on the internal politics of the military) and not, as is often asserted, the rural guerrilla presence.

As will be documented in the next section, the Peralta dictatorship is of greater interest because it did not undertake any guerrilla offensive (or counter - insurgency campaign) against the guerrillas in the countryside while the military was in power. This was due largely to the fact that the guerrillas did not pose a "threat" to the military regime in its efforts to restructure and reestablish the Ladino political forces on a more sound footing. A contributing factor was that the guerrillas continued throughout most of this period to be undefined ideologically, making it unclear as whether these "rebel military figures" were advancing a patriotic "nationalist" agenda or were adamantly "communist" and desired a radical societal revolution. The first position was a sentiment that the military itself could identify with as an expression of internal divisions that had persisted in the military since 1944, whereas the second was wholly anathema to the military as an institution and to the vast majority of urban Ladino sectors.

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[315] Even such an acute observer and critic of U.S. - Latin American relations as Juan José Arévalo firmly believed that the Kennedy initiative signalled a more equitable relationship that advanced the interests of Latin Americans generally.

[316] See Susan Berger (1992), Industrial Development + Manufacturers Record, "Guatemala,"Vol. 133, No. 4 (April, 1964) p. 45 - 76; Jerry Weaver, "The Military Elite and Political Control In Guatemala, 1963 - 1966," Social Science Quarterly. 50, 1 (June, 1969) p. 127 - 135; Jerry Weaver, "Political Style of the Guatemalan Military Elite," Studies In Comparative International Development. 5, 4 (1969-70) p. 63 - 81; Richard Adams, "The Development of the Guatemalan Military," Studies In Comparative International Development. 4, 5 (1968-69) p. 91 - 110. René Poitevin, (1977).

The successes of the Peralta dictatorship during its short stay in office were a result of several factors. One was the figure of Colonel Peralta Azurdia, recognized as a highly principled and incorruptible figure (even within the revolutionary literature) who upon becoming the interim leader of Guatemala (rejecting the title of "president") vigorously pursued an anti - corruption campaign within the various branches of government (including the courts), thus quickly acting upon a popular Ladino complaint against the Ydígoras regime. This included rescinding the "land - giveaway" of the national fincas / public lands the Ydígoras had turned over to his favored associates. A second factor was, as mentioned, the ability of the prominent military figures in power to be expressions of the various middle class positions, rather than the military enforcing a strict and inflexible ideological - policy position. Furthermore, the military successfully integrated into this ruling cabinet a prominent civilian component that actively promoted the CACM development strategy and the Guatemalan "advantage." Even though the dictatorship extended to the political right (and the center and left) a voice in government it implemented a number of economic policies that infuriated the right wing and displeased the U.S. embassy (as several U.S. investment efforts were denied by the regime) in an effort to adhere to a national development strategy. A third factor was that economic planning and state - sponsored development were defined by the emerging industrial sector and by a trained technocracy (comprised of both civilian and military personnel), leading to both a more aggressive and progressive modernization strategy being put in place.

Shortly after stepping into power the Peralta dictatorship initiated a series of sweeping economic reforms that included an overhaul of the taxation system (from indirect to direct taxes), the introduction of new taxes (to balance the budget), and strict banking / exchange controls to prevent continued capital flight that had been precipitated by Ydígoras' efforts at "emergency" taxation and the political climate in the national capital prior to the military coup. It is evident from statements by military figures at the time that they were attempting to adjust the political and economic spheres to meet the new demands imposed by high - risk finance capital operating in the country (by foreign, regional and domestic sources).

> One of the army's primary motives for taking over the government was the imperative necessity of rebuilding the shattered national economy, of restoring confidence to the production and labor sectors, and of managing public administration with honesty and efficiency. We are convinced that internal security and political reconciliation are insufficient to assure well - being for all Guatemalans. What is lacking is a vigorous action undertaken to foster the economic and social development of the country so that the fruits of progress and prosperity will be justly and equitably distributed among all the inhabitants.
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> Within the traditional socioeconomic organization of Guatemala, the state has the duty of fostering economic growth and social justice. This is not state socialism, nor a managed economy. It is, clearly and simply, a rational method of acting within the framework which the national and international realities of this century impose upon the evolution of peoples. If we want to avoid violent revolution, it is necessary that we understand our historic responsibility and that we make every effort to offer constructive solutions by means of a socially oriented capitalism.[317]

The above speech by Colonel Peralta is of interest because it expressed the military's clear and early understanding that "revolutionary appeals" (or "Communist movements") are fomented by the socio - economic conditions inside the country and not by external actors i.e. Cuba and the U.S.S.R., as had been the Ydígoras line. In addition, the Ladino middle class ideal of "social justice" through state - directed capitalist development (from the 1944-54 period) was very evident in both the words and the deeds of this military dictatorship.

It was this "moderate" developmental agenda put forward by these sectors that appears to have led to the formation of the Institutional Democratic Party (PID) under the Peralta dictatorship.[318] The PID was to be the party with the deepest ties among the officer class of the military, establishing almost outright collusion between the emerging civilian industrial / technocratic sectors and an increasingly politically active military.[319] This relationship was reciprocal, the military utilizing the developmental agenda of the PID to legitimize its various activities, and the civilian sectors of the PID utilizing the military's "influence" to advance its development initiatives. The PID was comprised of the following sectors: the emerging industrial bourgeoisie (a combination of rural and urban producers); new agro - export sectors

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[317] "Speech by Colonel Enrique Peralta Azurdia to the People of Guatemala (1963)," reprinted in The Politics of Antipolitics: The Military In Latin America. eds. B. Loveman and T. Davies, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1989) p. 287 - 292. See also Industrial Development and Manufacturers Report. (1964).

[318] The PID has been an elusive entity since it represented a combination of urban and rural Ladino sectors that had only come into prominence economically since the late 1940s, and more so during the 1950s and early 1960s.

[319] "Industrial" here does not refer to just the urban capital, as these sectors were to be very active in fomenting and integrating rural agricultural production with value added processing i.e. oilseed production for machinery lubricants and cooking oil, dairy products, and the development of new agricultural goods for export and domestic production / consumption (beef, cardamom, tobacco, irrigated vegetable production).

(medium sized producers); and highly educated (often foreign or military) engineers, technocrats, lawyers, and economic planners drawn from both military and civilian quarters. In its composition and its ideology it was clearly discernible from the reactionary oligarchic interests (coffee and old cattle interests) that underlay the MLN, as the costs and dimensions of the PID development strategy (involving extensive government intervention) were to often shock and infuriate the MLN.[320] It was also distinguishable from the PR (and later the Christian Democrats) in that the latter appealed to the numerous small business interests, organized urban labor, the bureaucracy, more progressive urban sectors of the capital (educated at the University of San Carlos in law, medicine, education), and some rural sectors but to a much lesser extent (whereas the PID was to become more equally based in both the rural areas, smaller centers, and in the capital). Perhaps what has led most to a common perception of the PID as "right wing" is the fact that this coalition was to be extremely violent in enforcing its agenda, a characteristic not often attributed to such well trained, highly educated and skilled individuals. As will be seen, in a country comprised of a large and denigrated native population, violence was not to be the monopoly or preserve of the "reactionary" right, particularly when the Maya (or any other opposition) became an obstacle to the incredibly vast development strategy pursued by the PID. The PID was a direct result, or "manifestation," of the first real working relationship formed between the officer class of the military and specific urban and rural middle class sectors that emerged within the context of a rapidly expanding and diversifying economy.

From the economic policies enacted by the Peralta dictatorship it is apparent that the regime keenly discriminated between forms of foreign investment, supporting finance capital that increased the manufacturing capacity of the country (towards the CACM) while preventing foreign capital from monopolizing specific resource areas (favoring instead domestic interests). U.S. investors, many in joint ventures with domestic capital, found the manufacturing and marketing of light consumer goods and capital goods to be extremely lucrative for three reasons. One was simply by virtue of operating through the CACM structures, in which by 1963 Guatemala's share of all commerce was between 25% and 30%. A second factor was that higher transportation costs were easily offset by low-cost labor, making Guatemala an attractive base for international markets as well. Most surprisingly, the third factor was the rapidly expanding internal market of Guatemala itself which sustained approximately 85% of the manufacturers operating in the country.[321] Versus the other Central American countries, Guatemala was the major importer of capital goods for manufacturing, agriculture, transportation and infrastructure i.e. electrical power, and the government aggressively advertised its commitment to expanding the manufacturing potential of the country through electrification, water, sewage, roads, and air transport.

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[320] It has often been observed that these two parties were vehemently "anti - communist" (which is true), but in this respect they were no different from the PR, the Christian Democrats, and numerous other smaller parties that were to emerge in the 1970s.

The dictatorship, though, refused to allow foreign investment to monopolize important resources or large regions of the country.[322] On two separate occasions foreign offers to have the exclusive rights for exploiting the vast timber reserves of the largely uninhabited El Petén were turned down (one offer worth 100 million dollars), the government instead granting cutting rights to 89 domestic companies.[323] The regime also hotly debated and postponed a decision on a proposal by EXIMBAL (U.S.'s Hanna Mining Co. and Canada's INCo.) to begin to exploit the huge nickel and cobalt reserves in the east (Izabal). Considerable U.S. lobbying (embassy and mining officials) was required before the proposal went through (the implications of which will be discussed in the next chapter). The dictatorship, in order to ensure the profitability of state infrastructure, also "required that all agricultural exports, except coffee, all exports of minerals and other subsoil products, and all imports and exports of firms benefiting from government tax exemptions be moved through either the port of Matias de Gálvez, the government port on the Pacific coast, or on the government - run airline."[324] The dictatorship did not open its doors to U.S. investors, and clearly acted to protect the growth of domestic and government investments in pressing forward with a national diversification strategy.

As observed in the prior section, initially the military coup was popular urban with numerous civilian political parties, but this had been contingent on the assumption that the military would simply dissolve the National Assembly, remove Ydígoras and proceed with new elections (as in 1957). At the time of the coup no one suspected that the military was going to advance deep structural changes within the economic and political spheres, changes over which the civilian political parties were to have little influence. After indefinitely suspending elections, the military intentionally imposed a "state of siege" that was to be in effect for 20 months out of its three year rule. The only active "civilian" political body was a new National Assembly hand - picked by the military, with MLN and PR representatives comprising together only 20 of 80 seats. This body's sole mandate was to draw up a new constitution and electoral laws that, once found acceptable by the dictatorship, were to establish the basis for civilian elections. Peralta himself made it clear that this process was intended to prevent the previous experience of fragmentation and the proliferation of small parties.[325]

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[321] See Industrial Development and Manufacturers Report. (1964).

[322] In this respect the Guatemalan military experience is critically different from the Brazilian military experience of the same time period. In the latter, the military permitted U.S. firms to openly enter and exploit key resource areas and buy up domestic industry, whereas in Guatemala the military was far more obstinate (nationalistic) and helps in explaining why in the 1966 elections the U.S. favored the PR over the PID.

[323] In addition these companies were not allowed to export rough logs (only sawed lumber) "which encouraged the further development of the lumber industry," and all exports had to go through government installations and contractors had to "build public works facilities the area of production." S. Berger, (1992) p. 127.

[324] S. Berger, (1992) p. 126.

The 1965 constitution and electoral laws that were drawn up expressed the political demands of increased financial capital and industrialization taking place in the country. Considerable powers over the economy were vested in the presidency (executive branch), particularly in regulating the banking industry and encouraging the growth of specific economic sectors, thus limiting the ability of the National Assembly to direct economic policy and preventing "grid lock" over economic issues (that had been renowned under Ydígoras). The presidency also assumed greater authority over administrative and regulatory bodies, and hence power over both the economy and the bureaucracy became highly centralized. The political party fragmentation was addressed by requiring that political parties could only become legally registered by producing a list demonstrating that they had 50,000 members of which 20% had to be literate (up from 5000 under Armas and 10,000 under Ydígoras). All existing parties had to be reinstated, their member lists reviewed by an electoral board overseen by the military (to screen for "subversives"). In this manner the military imposed unity upon both the political left and right in an effort to implant political order upon a rapidly industrializing urban center.[326] As noted, these reforms were an attempt to "stabilize" the political sphere, thus preserving conditions conducive to industrial development and capital investment. Additional constitutional guarantees safeguarded "foreign investment" (no expropriation without compensation), but this was less contentious as complementary finance capital was then strengthening several urban and rural middle class sectors (via the regional banking institution of the CACM, state spending, or manufacturing capital) while state intervention in the economy continued to undermine the remaining enclaves of foreign monopoly capital.

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[325] HAR. 17 (1964) p. 600.

[326] This is quite different from the Brazilian, Argentinian and Chilean military experiences where the concept of "bureaucratic - authoritarianism" attempted to explain a military effort at ending "politics" or political conflict that was seen as unhealthy for economic properity. In Guatemala the military never attempted to banish political debate and electoral competition, only reframing the boundaries of this arena to accomodate the new economic realities.

The three years of dictatorship cannot be characterized as a "coup" to the benefit of either the political right, the oligarchy, or the U.S. Shortly after the coup and in reaction to the continuing economic crisis, the military instituted the unpopular tax measures that had previously unified the left and right against Ydígoras. With these tax measures the dictatorship was able to propose the largest government budget in the history of Guatemala, leading to large investments in public works projects, i.e. urban / rural sewage and water facilities, airports, and electrification (including a hydroelectric project through INDE), and even an expansion in social benefits (to the exclusive benefit of certain lower class Ladinos). Most importantly (for understanding later Ladino - Maya relations), under Peralta the under - populated lowland north (specifically the northern regions of Alta Verapaz and Izabal and south - central El Petén) became of paramount importance as the dictatorship initiated a comprehensive strategy of development for these areas. This included efforts to begin the colonization of these areas as part of a multi - dimensional program to expand export production (namely beef and timber), increase levels of domestic crop production (corn and beans), to alleviate land pressures in the Ladino south - west and south - east, and to begin the determination and exploitation of northern resources (oil, gas, minerals, and archaeological / tourist sites). The military involved itself directly in the construction of transportation networks (roads, bridges, airfields) and became the administrative authority over these areas, a prominent position that has persisted to this day. Consequently, it was in this time period that the military asserted its authority over what was to be a pivotal and dynamic region of the economy, all developed at considerable cost to the state. Despite the fact that the dictatorship initiated numerous reforms (financial and structural) in a continuing effort to diversify and capitalize the economy, various Ladino economic sectors chafed at being unable to influence or determine government policy.

The ability of the military dictatorship to oversee the implementation of numerous unpopular reforms was less an expression of the military's "power" and more a result of the continued political fragmentation among civilian sectors. When confronted with an intransigent military presence, rather than a strong civilian condemnation occurring from the party elites, the majority of political parties jostled for advantage within the military as the dictatorship successfully co-opted the best educated figures (within the technocracy, commerce, industry) to advance a reformist capitalist project. Within this period then, there was a considerable breakdown between strictly defined "civilian" and "military" spheres, even though it was evident that the dictatorship was not beholden to a specific political ideology or party. As the military carried through unpopular political and economic measures various Ladino sectors from the left and the right began to openly oppose the dictatorship, but for different and sectoral reasons (not because a dictatorial government was just wrong). In particular, the "reactionary" sectors of the economy (coffee, cattle oligarchy) were aghast at the level of state penetration into the economy, i.e. exchange controls, taxes, public works, and their worst - case scenario came true when Colonel Peralta signed a decree to nationalize the coffee industry, taking away from the oligarchy (represented by ANACAFE) its traditional control over all facets of this important industry. This decree (Decree 417) led to such a backlash against Peralta by the combined forces of the agro - export sector that it was rescinded and replaced by a more compromising decree (Decree 449), a decree that nevertheless was a victory for the dictatorship since "in the final analysis, the coffee industry was placed under governmental control."[327] Such "arbitrary" initiatives by the dictatorship more than confirmed in the minds of this paranoid sector the unreliability of the military and a desire to return to a more open and competitive system. It was obvious that the oligarchy lacked strong allies within the officer class of the military as well as among the new industrial, financial and technocratic interests that had ascended under Peralta.[328] Now it was forced to become more active politically in defending its interests.[329]

Although it has often been recognized by the class - dependency perspective that the "anti - communist" rhetoric was very pronounced under the dictatorship (and even used to justify the coup in the first place), that the political left was repressed in this period, and that the electoral laws served to exclude several smaller left organizations from political participation, what also occurred were significant political changes that effectively eradicated several important political entities.[330] The PR and the MLN had no problem becoming officially registered. Still, it was apparent from the way in which political parties were being officially registered or denied legal status that the military was deciding this arbitrarily. Numerous parties of the left, center and right were too weakly organized to meet the new electoral guidelines but even some of those that did were denied legal status. The Christian Democratic Party (or DC, with influence among high - ranking military officials), the National Reformist Movement (important right - wing party) and the Guatemalan Social Party (led by Colonel Lucas Caballeros, holder of several cabinet posts under Ydígoras and Peralta) were all denied official status despite meeting the 50,000 membership criteria. Of the three, only the rejection of the DC is understandable as during the dictatorship the party became viciously divided between those who opposed and those who supported the dictatorship.[331] The more "populist" and anti - dictatorial forces eventually drove out the pro - dictatorship forces (the prominent DC leader Dr. José Trindad Ucles leaving to be one of the founders of the PID).[332] Nevertheless, it was known that this new party retained important contacts with high ranking military officials who sympathized with the DC claim that the party had to be legalized under the dictatorship out of a fear that a PR victory in the 1965-66 election would prevent their official registration (the PR not wanting to split the left - center vote).[333] In the end though its registration was denied. The denial of official status to the PSG is a little more surprising as the party was led by Colonel Lucas Caballeros, an active military officer who had held several cabinet posts and was the controversial reformist finance minister under the military dictatorship. Perhaps the most surprising though was the denial of the MNR, which was the reorganized "MDN" party that had supported both Castillo Armas and Ydígoras, but in the end was defeated on the political right by the military's recognition of the MLN party.[334] As may be observed (if not explained), political parties across the electoral spectrum were not allowed to compete in the 1965-66 elections, preventing a vote split on either the right, center or center - left. In the end only the MLN, PID, and PR were allowed to compete, forcing the other political groupings to either disband or to integrate themselves within these three options. Only the DC was to have the organizational strength to wait out this major election and to apply for official status years later.

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[327] Weaver, Studies In International Development. (1969 - 70) p. 77.

[328] This is not to say that these interests were wholly anatagonistic to the coffee interests as coffee monies were important to the diversification strategy, but these sectors were certainly not willing to give them oligarchy greater consideration than other economic sectors when the intention of diversification was to displace the political and economic weight of the coffee industry.

[329] This perhaps explains why the MLN was to emerge from relative obscurity to one of the major players in the political system (with the support of the Catholic Church and the traditional oligarchic interests).

[330] John Sloan's "Electoral Frauds and Social Change: The Guatemalan Example" Science and Society. 34, 1 (Spring, 1970) p. 78 - 91, "Electoral Power Contenders In Guatemala," Caribbean Studies. 11, 3 (Oct., 1971) p. 19 - 34, and "The 1966 Presidential Election In Guatemala," Inter - American Economic Affairs. 22, 2 (Autumn, 1968) p. 15 - 32.

At a general level civilian political forces across the spectrum were taken aback by the level of repressive powers exercised by the military dictatorship during its tenure. Leonel Sisniega, a prominent leader of the MLN, expressed shock at the way in which the dictatorship violated, attacked and subordinated even "respectable" urban and rural sectors.[335] The dictatorship fully utilized its incredible powers of arrest, incarceration and expulsion. Numerous political leaders were jailed or exiled while 1000s of organizations and residences were searched for incriminating "subversive" materials. Given the past political problems from all quarters, no "civilian" sectors of the capital (the capital suffering the brunt of the repression) were above reproach as the military's security forces operated with impunity. Economic benefits and "stability" were not sufficient conditions to overcome the Ladino national embarrassment of being again dominated by a repressive dictatorship (thought by the middle class to be a feature of a distant past), whose slow and conditional return to elections was considered a national disgrace.

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[331] Jose Chea, Guatemala: La Cruz Fragmentada. 2nd ed. (San Jose: DEI, 1989).

[332] Política y Sociedad. Numero Extraordinario (Abril, 1978) p. 1 - 106.

[333] This military support helps in explaining why the DC was permitted to organize several small cooperatives, and later some union organizations in rural areas without fear of repression from the oligarchy or the dictatorship.

[334] Dissidents within the MDN had left to form the MLN, in 1960, after the MDN decided to support the Ydígoras regime. J. Sloan, (1971) p. 29.

[335] In this respect the dictatorship of the 1960s was a marked departure from the repression of the earlier *caudillo* tradition i.e Ubico.

It was under these circumstances that the emerging rural guerrilla movement held considerable prestige in the capital in terms of leading an "anti - dictatorial struggle" for a return to democracy. This particular guerrilla agenda, that obscured the more radical intentions of certain guerrilla groups / activists, served to legitimize the armed movement among several middle class sectors. The fact that the guerrilla movement was led by several former military officers and in its propaganda it always appealed to nationalistic sentiments, diminished any fears that the guerrillas were bent on fulfilling a "communist" agenda. A Guatemalan expert of the day observed that the hesitation on the part of the military to confront the guerrillas could be attributed to the military's own officers being extremely unwilling to hunt down former officers, especially when these rebel officers had defined their struggle in terms of defending the "national honor" and the sovereignty of the nation.[336] Given the levels of repression in the capital, civilian support (at least in spirit) gave the guerrillas in this period considerable room to attack police and military forces without fear of civilian condemnation. As will be seen though, this broad urban sentiment in favor of the "armed struggle" was short lived, due in part to the change in political conditions by 1965, but as much to the extremely poor conditions for guerrilla activity existent in the rural countryside.

The Determinants and the History of the Guerrilla Movement in Guatemala

Perhaps the fortunes of no political movement in Guatemala have been less understood than those of the guerrilla movement in Guatemala. Considered to be operating in the Latin American country that supposedly offers the most advantageous socio - economic conditions for "revolutionary" activity, the guerrilla movement in Guatemala has never enjoyed the success that should accompany such propitious conditions. Consequently, its "popular" status (among observers inside and outside of Guatemala) has vacillated between being at times "romanticized" as the only solution to this nations problems to at other times being considered an ineffectual movement whose continued presence only accentuated state repression and threatened the "democratic" process. As in the late 1960s, the present status of the guerrilla movement lies in the latter camp. In this section the guerrilla movement will be analyzed from several distinct perspectives. The first will be a brief overview of the history of the guerrilla movement up to the present, outlining and examining the cycles of activity and defeat and how these have been understood. This will include a critical commentary on how the armed and electoral opposition (to the assumed military - oligarchic rule) has been understood to date. A second perspective will examine the claim that Guatemala, and particularly rural Guatemala, has been "ripe" or conducive to revolutionary activity. What will be demonstrated is quite the reverse, and that in fact the socio - economic relations of the national majority that reside in the rural countryside have been constructed in such a way as to make both reformist and revolutionary organizational activity extremely difficult (if not impossible in some regions). In addition, it will be shown that the regions where the socio - economic relations are the most oppressive and exploitive are those regions which have also proven to be the least receptive to any political activity, whether reformist or revolutionary. This section will set the discussion for the ethnic - regional discussion in the next chapter. A third perspective will then examine the strategies and internal divisions of the guerrilla movement, and its eventual demise in the late 1960s. This section will provide us with several insights into the changing class politics of the urban capital, while confirming my earlier argument on the non - revolutionary character of rural Guatemala.

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[336] See Richard Adams, Studies In International Development. (1969 - 70). We see here not just an explanation of the reluctance to pursue the guerrilla forces at this time, but also why the Peralta dictatorship may have opted to scale back both military and economic assistance from the United States, including Alliance for Progress funds, fully endorsing instead the CACM.

The present historical conjuncture, initiated with the election of a civilian president in 1986, offers an interesting point of departure in critiquing prevailing attitudes and assessments of the guerrilla movement. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, as the military - guerrilla conflict became focused within both the capital and the Maya highlands, there was considerable speculation that Guatemala was on the eve of an armed social revolution once again after only some ten years since the guerrilla movement had been visibly defeated. By the mid - 1980s the class - dependency perspective had to grudgingly admit that the guerrilla movement had been defeated by the military, generally concurring that the extreme violence exercised by the military had again prevented a revolutionary victory by the "masses." Except for those observers (particularly anthropologists) concerned with the specific plight of the Maya, few questions were raised about the actual revolutionary strength of the guerrilla movement by the late 1970s, its levels of urban and rural support, and whether or not there even existed a real possibility for success at this time. Since the mid - 1980s, though, the guerrilla movement (whose separate organizations have been represented by the National Revolutionary Unity of Guatemala or URNG), has maintained an armed and constant presence in several areas of the country, a status unparalleled in the history of the movement. In spite of continuous and unrelenting pursuit in this time period by the military, the movement has remained united and only engaged in actions commensurate with its numerical and organizational strength. Despite having finally acquired this level of presence in the country, the URNG is generally ignored or more recently, openly criticized and condemned. The latter trend is found among those observers who have forcefully taken up the cause of the Maya and condemned the guerrilla movement for either being the provocateurs of the extreme military violence against the Maya highlands in the first place, or for not leaving this region after it was apparent that the military had won by 1982-83. The URNG's continuing political role in society (with the exception of its involvement in extended "peace talks") is generally ignored or chastised now that the "newly" established electoral arena has permitted "free - competitive elections," but as in the past this forum has been the object of short - term "hope" and long - term despair (much like the history of the guerrilla movement).[337] What in retrospect is interesting about this "retreat" from revolutionary solutions to "electoral alternatives" is that this exact same stance by observers took place during the late 1960s as the rural guerrilla forces were defeated by the military. The main difference today is that this contemporary "retreat" has been buttressed with specific reference to the military repression against the Maya, a factor that was not relevant to the late 1960s as the Maya highlands were not entangled in that military - guerrilla conflict. Consequently, the class - dependency perspective (and other critical observers) have alternated in predicting either change through the electoral arena or through armed struggle, neither of which has come close to meeting these expectations despite the firmly held belief that Guatemala held, and holds, all the conditions necessary for either broadly based reformist or radical change.

For the last thirty years it has been assumed that several persistent conditions overwhelmingly contributed to there either being an almost "natural" support by the lower class majority for either reformist or revolutionary political options. One condition was the extreme poverty (experienced primarily by the rural majority) in overt contrast to the luxurious lifestyle of a numerically small and rapacious land - owning oligarchy.[338] This poverty is not imposed by specific geographical / climactic conditions, but has been created and perpetuated by a small but powerful sector of Guatemalan society (assumed to be supported by the military and the U.S.). A second condition has been that this impoverished majority has not been offered any reason to believe that their condition will be even minimally improved in the near future. Rather, attempts at organization and protest by reformist political movements / parties have been met with increasing levels of military repression, thus making the "revolutionary option" the only practical alternative. A third condition often mentioned is the 1944-54 "revolutionary" experience, which supposedly extended to the lower classes opportunities for organization and political activity that were eliminated before they came to fruition. This condition denotes a past but recent reference of "popular" experience with which post - 1954 reformist and revolutionary movements can identify and utilize in perpetuating support for an alternative agenda that had been initiated but not completed (due to the U.S. imperialist role in the region). At one level this triad appears to be, and remains, eminently convincing in delineating the conditions that one thinks would serve to unite the numerically huge lower or "popular" class against a small and identifiable oppressive oligarchic class whose existence is maintained solely through military repression (no internal legitimacy). Given the sheer numbers of people who persist in this economically exploitive and politically oppressive environment, it is not surprising that the sentiment among observers has been to suggest that there exists an extremely weak and fragile political - economic structure prone to rapid internal change (or collapse) as the rural / urban masses organize to contest their condition. After thirty years of this type of speculation, though, and having witnessed the rise and decline of guerrilla activity and reformist political movements across the national territory, the collective evidence points to an extremely different set of evaluations.

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[337] On contemporary criticisms of the guerrilla movement see David Stoll, (1993) and Victor Perera, (1993). See also Guatemalan and international press and magazine reports. For an uncritical account of the guerrilla movement and debate concerning the "content" of Guatemalan democracy, see Robert Trudeau, Guatemalan Politics: The Struggle For Democracy. (Boulder: Lynn Rienner, 1993) and Susanne Jonas, (1991).

The most important premise that I will begin to develop in this section (and provide more evidence for in the next chapter) is that rural Guatemala has not been (and is not today) a setting conducive to revolutionary activity. Hence the Ladino southwest, the Ladino southeast (since the late 1960s) and the Maya highlands have not held the possibilities for initiating, organizing and achieving a revolution through the countryside. I make this claim while acknowledging the fact that the majority of Guatemala's population resides in the countryside, that there is persistent poverty, and that there exists extreme inequalities in land distribution. This rural "stability" (for lack of a better word) though, is not due just to the apparent ethnic division, although the characteristics of this division serve to augment the problems of political organization and activity. Rather, it is a result of the complex and varied socio - economic and ethnic relations that have developed in each respective region. For instance, it will be demonstrated that those regions where the most obviously exploitive and repressive socio - economic relations have persisted in this century (the Ladino southwest, the Maya northeast) have also been the regions least penetrable or receptive to any sustained guerrilla or reformist political activity. The fact that such vast expanses of rural Guatemala have not been conducive to reformist or revolutionary political activity has had a significant effect on the strategies, activities and relative strengths of the different guerrilla organizations over time. This, I contend, has also led to a history of contradictory strategies, severe internal divisions, and ultimately major military setbacks all stemming from the condition that rural Guatemala is a mass of regional - ethnic complexities and contradictions that do not lend themselves to sustained organizational and revolutionary activity. Rural Guatemala is not a simplistic structure where a disrupted peasant class (in the process of proletarianization) confronts an oligarchic class, as is often assumed. Rather there exists a complexity that has perplexed and bedeviled both revolutionary and reformist attempts to take advantage of the overt rural poverty, exploitation and repression. It is this multiplicity of relations that I will attempt to come to terms with, hopefully elucidating the many implications for political organization that arise from these scenarios.

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[338] Numerous observers since the 1960s have begun their analysis with a statistical analysis, highlighting the low levels of life expectancy and infant mortality, high rates of illiteracy, persistant diseases and widespread malnutrition, lack of healthcare facilities, and the extremely high concentrations of lands by a small percentage of landowners while the rural majority lacks sufficient lands for subsistence. These statistics are often contrasted with the natural wealth and potential productivity of lands that the oligarchy leaves under - or unutilized.

The best way to begin to understand this "complexity" is to examine rural Guatemala in terms of three principle regions distinguished by their dominant forms of economic production (the socio - economic structures as of the 1960s): the Ladino southwest and the Maya northeast; the north - central / west Maya highlands; and the Ladino southeast. The first of these geographic regions are typified by the dominance of agro - export production in what is probably best described as a plantation structure or system (commonly referred to in Guatemala as the "finca").[339] The main products were (and are) coffee, cotton, sugar cane, cattle and bananas. Banana production (which had been monopolized by UFCo.) was shrinking in importance as an export while cotton, sugar cane and cattle were rapidly increasing in importance. Cotton and sugar cane were grown principally along the coastal lowlands of the Ladino southwest, while coffee flourished in the higher altitudes of the Ladino southwest and the Maya northeast (except Izabal where banana and cattle prevailed). Cattle production was interspersed in these regions and undergoing expansion as an industry for both export (to the U.S.) and domestic consumption. The socio - economic relationship most prominent throughout these vast agro - export regions was the *patron - mozo colono* relationship. The *patrones* (collectively known somewhat inaccurately as the land owning oligarchy) tended to control huge expanses of land of which only a small percentage was actually utilized (and not uncommon for the larger landowners to have fincas located in several different regions). Collectively the *patrones* were an expression of different agricultural interests, the oldest and most established (and reactionary) being the coffee oligarchy and some cattle interests. Newer export sectors (in cattle, cotton, sugar cane) tended to be drawn from the urban and rural Ladino middle class (including within the officer class of the military) who had taken advantage of state credits / new infrastructure to develop these exports. The *mozos colonos* were the hundreds of thousands of impoverished rural Ladinos (of the southwest) and Maya (of the northeast) who exchanged labor for access to a plot of land for subsistence (possibly surplus) production on the fincas. Depending on the size of the finca, there could be from tens to hundreds of families exchanging land for labor. Although these numbers were greatest within the coffee industry, they were also utilized in the new agro - export sectors as permanent laborers. The larger agro - export interests, in an effort to secure adequate levels of labor during the harvest period, had even "secured" lands in the Maya highlands. These lands were worked by Maya families for subsistence who then were obligated to repay the "rent owed" by traveling to the lowlands or coffee fincas to work during the harvest season in return for continued access to subsistence lands owned by the *patron*. The patron - mozo colono relationship then, was firmly instituted in a pattern that cut across the national territory.

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[339] Maya and Ladino refer to the numerical majority in the region, not to who controls or dominates the production process. The Ladino southwest is represented by the departments of San Marcos (south - central), Quetzaltenango (south - central), Retalhuleu, Suchitepéquez, Escuintla, Santa Roas, Jutiapa, Sacatepéquez (south), Guatemala (south); and the Maya northeast by Baja Verapaz, Alta Verapaz (south - central) and central Izabal.

The surprising feature of this relationship is that, despite its exploitive and demeaning properties, it was incredibly advantageous to the patrones as the mozos colonos have come to be recognized as wholly unreceptive to reformist or revolutionary appeals.

> The manorial, or hacienda, system, which includes two kinds of agriculture: cultivation of small plots for subsistence by a peasantry, combined with cultivation by customary labor dues of domain land under the lord's supervision, which may be used for commercial crops. There is a poorly developed market in land, and neither the value of land nor the value of labor is great. Labor is generally unfree, attached to the estate through the tenure system of personal peonage. The landlord class disposes of absolute power over the peasants. The two principal classes of this system have very different standards of living and legal

> privileges. The dominated peasantry has virtually no political power or organizational capabilities.[340]

The power a patron had over the mozos colonos (hundreds, perhaps thousands of individuals per finca) was drawn completely from the fact that the patron exercised absolute authority over who had access to land. With no legal rights to proprietorship, the mozos lived in constant fear of losing their access to subsistence plots provided by the patron. Confronted with persistent economic insecurity, lacking any legal recourse, and laboring without the benefit of wages or salary (thus no accumulation from which to acquire lands elsewhere), mozos were wholly beholden to the patron, unwilling to act in any way that might displease the patron and lead to one's family being expelled from the finca. Since the patrones exercised such broad discretionary power over the mozos (the power to decide subsistence or starvation), there was a fair bit of latitude exercised in this most arbitrary form of authority. While mozos on some fincas enjoyed the opportunity to produce / market surpluses, other mozos were forced to turn over surpluses (or a portion of) to the patron thus continually being maintained at a bare subsistence level. What was documented as a constant in this relationship was that, on top of the economic security, mozos suffered the worst privations, including physical / psychological coercion, persistent impoverishment, and virtually no possibilities for upward mobility (including by their children). What ensured the stability and permanence of this relationship was that no opportunities existed for mozos outside of this relationship, except the more desperate situation of being reduced to being a permanent seasonal laborer if one lost access to the patron's lands.

On the surface then we may easily observe the persistent poverty and exploitation that accompanies the lucrative agro - export industry, conditions and contradictions that would suggest an environment conducive to either reformist or radical political organizations. Beneath this surface, though, lie a set of socio - economic relationships that belie this initial optimism. The mozos existed under conditions of spatial separation across an enormous rural environment, and even at an economic level they entered into few instances of interchange within rural markets or with other mozos due to the lack of wages and products for exchange. Wholly dependent on the "good will" of the patron, this class of permanent laborers / subsistence producers has for the last thirty years been a "dead zone" for the organizational efforts of various guerrilla groups. As a consequence the vast productive agro - export regions that cut a swath across the national territory from the southwest to the northeast served as a formidable barrier to any radical political organization being achieved. At the level of guerrilla strategy, and despite numerous attempts by the different guerrilla organizations over time, the important agro - export sector was never to be disrupted by sustained guerrilla activity based among the mozo colono population (whether Maya or Ladino). As will be demonstrated, this was to be a serious limitation for the rural guerrilla movement that first emerged in the 1960s, and later during its reemergence in the late 1970s.

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[340] Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Social Classes in Agrarian Societies. (New York: Anchor Books, 1975) p. 67 - 68.

A second rural area of Guatemala, comprised of the Maya highlands in central and north - western Guatemala (to the exclusion of the northeast) provided in theory socio - economic circumstances more hospitable for guerrilla activity, but this entailed confronting the numerous dimensions of the apparent ethnic division in the country. At this time these ethnic divisions, both among the Maya and between the Maya and Ladinos, established a set of barriers as rigid and impenetrable to radical political organization as those pertaining to the agro - export sector.[341] The socio - economic structure of the Maya highlands was (and is) dominated by hundreds of thousands of small and medium - sized land holdings, a combination of subsistence and surplus - producing plots utilized to produce domestic staples, i.e. corn, beans, onions, garlic, a variety of squash plants, and wheat. Although coffee and cattle fincas (with mozos) were visible in some areas (central Huehuetenango, south - central Quiché, Quetzaltenango) these were not the most prominent form of land tenure. As previously observed (in Chapter Two), small and medium - sized land holding - petty commodity production was the basic economic structure maintaining the integrity of the Maya communities, communities that were enmeshed into a highly developed system of exchange through an intricate highland market. While the medium - sized Maya and Ladino landholders enjoyed a certain privileged status as surplus producers the larger majority were small - sized Maya landholders - petty commodity producers, but even this latter group is extremely complex. For instance, a small - sized Maya landholder on a parcel of good quality land (which depended on the location of the community or even one's lands within a community) could produce enough to subsist through the year and produce a surplus to market in addition. A small subsistence landholder may also have the opportunity to rent land from which to produce either a surplus or enough to subsist on, or have one's income supplemented through the sale of non - agricultural goods. These two scenarios, that are dependent on a varied number of conditions not under the control of the small - holding Maya (land quality, access to lands for rent, strength of market system in proximity to the community), represented the best - case scenario for the small - holding Maya and meant that one did not have to migrate for seasonal wages to the agro - export areas. Being forced to migrate for wages (due to debts, unproductive lands, bad crop year, poor placement in the market system) was considered a worst - case scenario. In terms of "revolutionary theory," though, this has been wholly misunderstood.

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[341] What seperates the Guatemalan and Peruvian experiences at this time is that by the mid- to late 1960s the Peruvian Communist Party (via the teachers' union and the university in Ayacucho) had already cultivated strong links with the local native communities (overcoming the ethnic / linguistic barrier) laying the bases for the emergence of the Shining Path in the rural native regions, whereas in Guatemala the PGT was based in the capital and no effort was made to address the ethnic / linguistic barriers. See Daniel Masterson, Militarism and Politics In Latin America: Peru From Sanchez Cerro to Sendero Luminoso. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991.

For critical observers of Guatemala, the fact that the Maya have had to migrate en masse (some 500,000 to 700,000 men, women and children) to the agro - export regions where they labored often under horrendous conditions for meager wages, epitomized conditions ripe for potential revolutionary activity once the "cultural" barriers had been sufficiently eroded. Generally, it is suggested, this mass migration pointed to the non - viability of the land tenure system in the highlands (either outright landlessness or plots that did not provide year long subsistence) and that the exploitation experienced in the agro - export sector only confirmed the absolute immiseration experienced by hundreds of thousands of Maya families. There are two theoretical positions from the class - dependency perspective that envisioned potential revolutionary activity from these seasonal migrants. One position, less concerned with theoretical specifics, argued that this immiseration experienced in both the highlands and the agro - export sector was a sufficient condition for the Maya to gravitate towards supporting a revolutionary agenda.[342] A second more "hard - line" Marxist position viewed this migration (and the resultant exploitation) as a necessary but positive historical dynamic in which the "conservative peasant" was undergoing proletarianization.[343] Laboring in the agro - export sector represented an initial phase of "semi- proletarianization" and as landlessness became more extreme in the highlands, full proletarianization would result. This process of proletarianization was considered critical to creating a class open to organization and eventually radical political activity, and also to breaking down the cultural barriers that separated rural Ladinos (mozos) from Maya (seasonal labors). Both of these premises are fundamentally flawed, as both assume that "landlessness" (with no other options but seasonal labor) due to expropriation for agro - export production was an increasing and inevitable process (as was observed in areas of El Salvador and Nicaragua). In Guatemala this was not the case.

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[342] Impressions drawn from Galeano, (1969) and Thomas Melville and Marjorie Melville (1971).
[343] See, for example, Carlos Figueroa Ibarra (1980).

By the early part of this century the Maya highlands had been partially transformed towards agro - export production (mainly coffee) where possible, i.e. lower highlands of the southwest coast, south - central Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz, south - central Quiché, central Huehuetenango, with no radical expansion after the 1940s.[344] Forced migration (under Ubico) had given way to more "voluntary" forms of migration after 1944. What continued to fuel the Maya migration was not community disruption from increased land expropriation (by Ladinos), but a limited land base in the face of an expanding Maya population. This factor, by the 1960s, was affecting communities unequally and different communities were able to or not able to adjust to this condition depending on their placement in the highlands. For instance, those communities that had in their possession good quality lands with access to modern forms of infrastructure (roads, transportation) were able to extricate themselves almost fully from the migratory labor system through agriculture and/or the sale of non - agricultural commodities. Many other communities maintained a sufficiently productive agricultural base that migratory labor was only necessary during years in which they faced poor crop yields. Other communities that rested on poor quality lands remote from transportation and marketing facilities were confronted with yearly migration as a necessity, but numbers again varied from year to year depending on how the community adjusted to increased population pressures and yearly levels of crop production. Migration patterns were continually changing over both the long - term and the short - term, and the reasons for migrating for wages in any one particular year varied as well. There is no evidence to show that the actual numbers of Maya involved in migrating have increased (or decreased) over several decades, nor is there evidence to demonstrate that land expropriation for agro - export production was fueling the migration for wages.

The first class - dependency position outlined previously is inaccurate because the vast majority of Maya migrants were not faced with absolute desperation (or landlessness). Rather, most Maya communities were confronted with a yearly cycle of scarcity (hence poverty) and then subsistence / surplus foodstuffs. The period of scarcity took place between roughly April / May (after the planting of their own crops and the beginning of the rainy season) until July / August (start of their own harvest period). By October / November the migration for wages would begin as subsistence / surplus levels began to wane and as the agro - export crops became ready for harvest. Wages (either in advance or during the harvest) and food supplied by the patrones then covered subsistence through the dry season until the Maya returned to their communities to plant their own crops. Low wages in the agro - export sector ensured that no accumulation took place to the point that savings went beyond simple survival over the short - term (but perhaps until crops were ready in the highlands). Nevertheless this cycle of scarcity (subsistence crops not mature and agro - export harvest season complete) followed by local abundance was the yearly plight of most Maya migrants. If one was "landless" (unable to rent or own land) then one's only recourse was to remain in the agro - export sector as a mozo colono / permanent laborer or move permanently to an urban center for work if no opportunities existed in one's own community. Such an individual though was no longer a migrant seasonal laborer from the highlands. The second position is incorrect then because the Maya were not in a process of becoming fully proletarianized, and in fact their participation as "semi - proletarians" in the agro - export sector is what has made the small holding Maya viable to this day. With the agro - export diversification into cotton and sugarcane, the harvest period (which was previously limited to coffee) was extended by several months. This extended the period in which a migrant worker could earn wages and reduced the period of scarcity that one would confront in the highlands. Neither the expanding cotton or sugar cane industries affected the land tenure system in the highlands, and it extended the harvest period Maya seasonal laborers were to move in and out of relative to their own levels of local production in the highlands. The agro - export sector never held out the possibility for full proletarianization (due to the limited harvest period, low wages, lack of rural organization), but ironically, I would argue, the agro - export diversification served to maintain the viability and integrity of Maya small holders who comprised the bulk of the Maya population (and hence the "strong" community structures that so many observers now celebrate).[345] This is in no way a back - handed defense of the migratory seasonal labor system and the ruthless practices employed by Ladino landowners. It is only an attempt to explain why the small land - holding Maya have been able to persist for so long under uncertain conditions and against theoretical assessments that have all pointed to their imminent demise.

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[344] While there was a gradual increase in coffee production until the late 1970s, the majority of this increase was due to small and medium - sized landowners (Maya and Ladino) taking up coffee growing, and not to the wholesale expropriations of Maya lands that had characterized coffee expansion up until the 1940s.

The question that remains is the degree to which we may argue that the Maya highlands, and in particular the small holding seasonal laborer, represented a potential source of revolutionary activity in the 1960s. Here, as in the agro - export sector, the potential was not great as economic differentiation, migratory patterns and ethnic differences were to create a matrix of complex problems that were (and are) a "nightmare" for a guerrilla organization to work within (even without the added dilemma of military repression). Certainly the medium land - holding Maya, the Maya with sufficient small land holdings for subsistence / surplus production, and those Maya who had begun to sustain themselves through an array of economic activities (petty commodity production, small business, transportation, labor contractors, professions) were not open to supporting a revolutionary agenda. Individually, and perhaps as communities, they were beginning to succeed materially and were opening up new opportunities for themselves and their children.

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[345] As may be observed I view the causation here in reverse, countering the commonly held view that some unidentifiable "sense of community" made it possible for the Maya to endure their explotiation in the agro - export sector and poverty in the highlands. In fact, from an economic standpoint it was this "exploitation" that made it possible for many Maya communities (or varying percentages of) to sustain themselves due to temporary or permanent conditions over which they had no control. As observed in Chapter Two, when certain Maya regions were confronted with expropriation for coffee production i.e. Escuintla, their communities were decimated. Following this logic, if expropriation for agro - export production was fuelling Maya migration in the 1960s, a high percentage of Maya communities should have been wiped out. This was not taking place.

The small landholders, many of whom were forced to migrate for wages (regularly or irregularly) present very different scenarios for analysis. As subsistence producers in their own communities they were spatially scattered across a vast and ruggedly imposing geographical area whose separation was reinforced by the lack of roads, methods of communication, and ultimately opportunities for broad based interaction. In this atmosphere, their only opportunity for interaction was through the market system which occurred rarely compared to the time devoted to one's own lands. The communities themselves were openly concerned about maintaining the integrity of their municipal lands versus other communities (thus fomenting long - standing rivalries between communities), and within and between specific highland departments there existed no common language for communication (whether Spanish or one of the 20 some Maya languages in this region).[346] When residing in the highlands as subsistence producers, the small land - holding Maya were the "conservative" force often theorized about in the Marxist tradition. Furthermore, their lands were not being disrupted by the imposition of finance capital or expropriation for agro - export production. Physical geography, extremely low levels of infrastructure development by the state, and rigorous conditions in which to maintain family survival all played a role in isolating communities across the highlands. In addition, the percentages of Maya forced to migrate for wages varied significantly by community (from 1 -2% to 80 - 90%) and by geographical area. The defining characteristic of the Maya was not that they were seasonal laborers, but that they were small landholders - petty commodity producers confronted by numerous different conditions to which they responded in an effort to retain the viability of their land holdings (and hence their community structures). Migrating for wages was but one avenue utilized by this sector of small landholders to ensure some measure of economic security.

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[346] Perhaps no greater factor has been overlooked by observers who have seen "revolutionary" potential from the highlands than the linguistic dimension alone, let alone the socio - economic conditions outlined herein.

As seasonal laborers in the agro - export sector, though, the Maya were not immersed in conditions that could be considered markedly better for organization. Moving from disparate communities across the highlands they became further displaced across a far more expansive area that included the Chiapas in Mexico, the Ladino southwest, the Maya northeast; and within the highlands to coffee fincas located in Quiché and Huehuetenango. Divided across 1000s of fincas in unfamiliar regions, segregated from the mozos colonos on the fincas, working 16 - 20 hour days, closely supervised and dependent on the patron for food, amalgamated with several different Maya linguistic groups, and experiencing difficult circumstances from day to day, the Maya seasonal laborers lived under conditions that left little opportunity for organizational activity or contact with guerrilla organizations. Additionally, from testimonies it is evident that the Maya laborers were not immediately concerned with transforming this temporary labor environment, but awaited the opportunity to return to the security and familiarity of their own lands and communities in the highlands.[347] What is of interest here is that the apparent ethnic differences (linguistic, attire, religious beliefs, cosmology) were in themselves the least important obstacles (or obstacles that were not as insurmountable) to political activity and organization versus the changing socio - economic relations that the Maya entered into over short periods of time in any given year. Ethnic differences only favored the position of the Ladino patrones who were able to exploit the existing divisions among the Maya, but they were more obviously taking advantage of the pressures related to the Maya land base and the unequal distribution of wealth / opportunities in the highlands. Nevertheless, in terms of devising a revolutionary strategy that could penetrate the geographic, economic and ethnic barriers, it is unclear if this is even possible today. During the 1960s the guerrillas had not examined the "rural question" in any form close to this as the Maya highlands (and the Maya majority) were not considered important to their overall strategy at the time.

What is often put forward is that the first guerrilla organizations enjoyed a certain degree of rural success in the southeast until they were confronted with a massive counter - insurgency offensive by the military (backed by the U.S.). This initial success led observers to speculate that all of rural Guatemala held this potential for sustained guerrilla / revolutionary activity. What was thoroughly overlooked is the fact that there were specific socio - economic conditions that existed in the Ladino southeast that did not hold for the rest of rural Guatemala and that the success the guerrillas had really only pertained to four departments (Zacapa, Izabal, and to a lesser extent El Progreso and Chiquimula). There are several characteristics about the Ladino southeast that made the population of the area susceptible to a combination of nationalistic and alternative development appeals. One was that the area was dominated by a combination of small and medium - sized land holdings which were by and large owned by Ladinos (with pockets of Maya peoples in Chiquimula, Izabal, and Jalapa). This Ladino - dominated area had experienced a long depression, not being a viable agro - export region since the mid - 1800s (except for the UFCo. banana monopoly in Izabal) and marginalized by state development since 1944 (versus the capital and southwest). The land itself was arid and of low productive quality relative to other regions of the country. Economic insecurity was the prevailing condition regardless of the size of one's lands and this instability is what had forced many Ladinos to move to the capital in search of work. Ignored in successive state development initiatives, residing on marginal lands inadequate for agro - export production, unable to maintain a level of security from land ownership, and surrounded by a very low degree of market activity (whether in commodity production or agricultural goods), these rural Ladinos were extremely susceptible to supporting a Ladino guerrilla movement calling for the national development of their rural region.

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[347] See Menchú, Rigoberta, I, Rigoberta Menchú. ed. E. Burgos - Debray (London: Verso, 1984).

In comparison to the Maya highlands, the Ladino southeast was largely monolingual and the geographic terrain not near as rugged and divided while offering sets of low mountain ranges (Sierra de las Minas) and extensive wooded areas from which the guerrilla forces could operate. Moreover, the military made no concerted effort to eliminate guerrilla forces in the area until 1967, some four years after the guerrillas initiated activity in the area. As mentioned earlier, this hiatus was due to a prolonged ideological confusion as to what the guerrilla movement represented and was striving to achieve. This confusion was not propagated intentionally, but was an expression of the deep and often vicious ideological divisions that permeated the emerging guerrilla movement of the 1960s.[348]

The Vicissitudes of the Guerrilla Movement (1960s)

The armed guerrilla struggle in the rural countryside had its origins in the military revolt of November, 1960, when several junior officers refused to surrender and sought refuge in Honduras after the revolt was put down by forces loyal to the Ydígoras administration. It was not until 1963 that some of these rebel military officers were to successfully establish a movement in the Ladino southeast.[349] Open to being interviewed by the international press, the guerrilla leaders during this period truly became "romantic heroes" both within and outside of Guatemala, depicted as struggling against an unjust and illegitimate military government (1963-66). Such portrayals, that often evoked a sense of imminent victory in light of the impoverishment of the majority, failed to consider the varied socio - economic conditions (listed above) or the limited revolutionary achievements of this extremely factionalized movement. The unwillingness of the military to launch an effective counter - offensive until late in 1966 was often misinterpreted as "fear," and fomented the misconception that the guerrilla movement posed a substantive threat to the military dictatorship in spite of the visible rifts in the movement and the limited national territory within which the guerrillas actually operated.

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[348] Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, La Violencia En Guatemala Como Fenómeno Político. (Cuernavaca: CIDOC Cuaderno No. 61, 1971).

Between 1961 and 1963 a small group of the rebel officers that had fled to Honduras formed the Rebel Movement of November 13 (MR-13) its sole agenda being the overthrow of the Ydígoras administration. Early in 1961 they had returned to the capital from Honduras and initiated contact with several political parties (including the PGT) but principally they reestablished contact within the military in hopes of engendering another military revolt. Pursued by security forces in the capital (leading to the death of Alejandro De León), in 1962 they initiated attacks on the offices of the United Fruit Co. and local military detachments (in Izabal) and then broke up into three columns in an effort to recruit local peasants to eventually reunite for an attack on the important military base located in the rural center of Zacapa. These activities coincided with the demonstrations in the capital of March - April 1962, but in themselves MR-13 did not have a cohesive ideological agenda or strategy. Of the three columns, one was quickly destroyed by the military, a second rapidly disintegrated, and the third remained in the mountains for a while and then simply returned to the capital (without ever attacking the base in Zacapa). After returning to the capital, several members of MR-13 traveled to Cuba.[350] Upon returning to Guatemala they pressured the PGT into establishing rural guerrilla activity (in December of 1962).

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[349] CIDOC, Guatemala: La Violencia (Part II and III), Dossier 20 and 21, (Cuernavaca: 1968); Documento De La Direccion Del Movimiento Revolucionario 13 De Noviembre, Primera Declaracion De La Sierra De Las Minas. (Montevideo: CISA, 1965); Marta Harnecker, Pueblos En Armas. (Mexico: Universidad Autonoma De Guerrero, 1983); Turcios Lima. (Habana: Tricontinental, 1968); Eduardo Galeano, (1969); and the weekly Política (Mexico City) May 15, 1960 to Oct. 15, 1967.

[350] These members of MR - 13 met with leading revolutionary figures in Cuba, determining an ideological line and revolutionary strategy to return to Guatemala with.

The PGT was decidedly hesitant about initiating such activities, its principle strategy in this period being to support the coming to power of a reformist national - democratic bourgeoisie through elections, a scenario that looked promising at this time as the Ydígoras regime confronted deeper crises. In addition, a previous attempt at rural guerrilla activity (March, 1962, in Baja Verapaz) had met with disaster, lasting only two days before being detected and destroyed by the military.[351] The PGT saw its primary role as advancing the interests of the urban working class behind a reformist bourgeois sector, a sector that would then institute the necessary measures to bring about the eradication of the "feudal" rural structures. In contrast, the MR-13 (and various student organizations influenced by the Cuban Revolution) saw the rural environment as extremely conducive to revolutionary activity due simply to the misery and exploitation. As a consequence, rural guerrilla activity did not fit comfortably into the PGT strategy and confronted the PGT with a set of conditions and tactics with which it had very little experience or understanding. It was only after the military coup in March of 1963, that the PGT initiated and supported the guerrilla activity in the rural countryside as part of a larger "anti - dictatorial - democratic" struggle in the capital. Ideologically, though, there remained several unresolved issues that were to lead to acrimonious debates and divisions.

In April of 1963 the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR) went into action. Initially comprised of four armed guerrilla organizations in three fronts, a series of divisions and military setbacks quickly left only two guerrilla fronts in place between 1963-67. One was the Edgar Ibarra Front led by Turcios Lima (FGEI) and based mainly in Zacapa, and the second was the Alejandro De León Front led by Yon Sosa (FGAL) and based in Izabal. The initial choice of the Ladino south - east as the region to begin guerrilla activity appears to have come from the reasoning of the PGT. The PGT felt that two conditions favored guerrilla activity, one being that this was an area where peasants had received UFCo. lands under Arbenz and then had them taken away after 1954, and the second was that the peasant composition was Ladino.[352]

From the beginning these two fronts pursued two very different strategies for achieving rural support. The front in Izabal (led by Yon Sosa) concerned itself primarily with establishing a sound base of support among rural peasants, workers on the UFCo. lands, and dock workers. Its rural support network, though limited in scope, was very successful as it integrated the guerrilla organization with local communities, eventually even substituting all government officials with guerrilla militants. This tactic and experience appears to have made Yon Sosa's front receptive to supporting the strategy of a "prolonged peasant struggle," being even somewhat successful in incorporating Maya (Kekchi) peasants from the Izabal region. This brought Yon Sosa into open conflict with the leadership of the urban - based PGT. The front in Zacapa (led by Turcios Lima) more thoroughly pursued an aggressive strategy of attacking the military and police across the region, and threatening and disrupting transport on the important highway between the capital and the Atlantic port.

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[351] Led by Carlos Paz Tejada (military officer under Arbenz) and comprised of 23 young militants, 13 were killed in conflict with the miltary and several of those who fled were captured. The militants were predominantly students and it is unclear whether or not the PGT had fully endorsed this action.

[352] CIDOC, Guatemala: La Violencia (Part III), Dossier No. 21 (1968) p. 4 / 86 - 87.

Unlike Yon Sosa's front that relied heavily on local peasant and worker support, Turcios Lima's front had several weaknesses. One was that Lima utilized a strategy of "armed propaganda" where the guerrillas continually moved across the countryside temporarily occupying rural communities to give propaganda speeches and to acquire supplies. Given the depressed economic conditions in the Ladino southeast and the "nationalistic / anti- dictatorial" line of the guerrillas, the FGEI rapidly expanded its area of activity and acquired a broad (but superficial) base of support for the guerrilla cause.[353] The FGEI (and Turcios Lima) earned the support not just of small landowners and the rural poor but also medium sized *finqueros*.[354] Since the FGEI was continually moving to spread "propaganda" it had no secure base of support, relying instead on an unstable coalition of landowners (small and medium sized) and on student militants and supplies from the capital. In fact it was common for students to spend their weekends as paid guerrilla militants with the FGEI, returning to the capital for university classes during the week. This rapidly accumulated support, though, led the PGT - FGEI to criticize the patient but effective organizational work in Izabal by the FGAL. The PGT - FGEI accused Yon Sosa of creating a front vulnerable to military attack, when in reality what made the FGEI so successful initially was that the military was making no concerted effort to eradicate the guerrilla forces. Nevertheless, the ability of the FGEI to move with impunity throughout the Ladino south - east while constantly harassing and eluding the military and police, gave Turcios Lima and his front a certain mythical quality both in the capital and internationally. The shortcomings and weaknesses of the FGEI strategy were to become readily apparent.

By the end of 1964 the guerrilla movement had become visibly divided between the PGT and Yon Sosa, at a time when sentiments in the capital were strongly against the continuation of the dictatorship. This division has generally been understood as a division between the Marxist (Soviet) line of the PGT and the Trotskyist (Mexican) line supposedly adopted by Yon Sosa's front, but there was considerably more to this than has been recognized.[355] At one level it must be observed that such an open breakup could only have occurred in a period when the military was not aggressively pursuing the guerrilla fronts (as will be observed), leading to extremely high expectations concerning the possibility of defeating the military dictatorship via rural - urban guerrilla warfare. The PGT had remained committed to acting as the "vanguard" of the urban working class, a class that was recognized as extremely small (estimated at some 50,000 individuals) and reformist, not revolutionary, in character. The PGT held that without a more radicalized (and larger) working class the historical conditions did not exist for a social revolution, and only by supporting progressive sectors of the bourgeoisie could these conditions be created. For the PGT the guerrilla fronts were only one facet of several forms of struggle against the dictatorship in an effort to return to democracy and economic reformism. Such a confining and decisively rigid strategy created dissension within the rural guerrilla fronts (particularly Yon Sosa's) where it was felt that the guerrillas were enduring all the risks and repression of the struggle. Furthermore, their initial success in the Ladino south - east led to a feeling that an offensive strategy to overthrow the dictatorship should be endorsed by the PGT, arguing that the rural conditions were appropriate and the international context favorable (as part of a larger international offensive against U.S. imperialism). The PGT accused Yon Sosa's front of being "utopian" and petit bourgeois, failing to appreciate the "concrete" material conditions of Guatemala. Yon Sosa's front accused the PGT of vacillation, reformism, pacifism, manipulation, putting the guerrillas "in the service of a bourgeois objective," and of leaving the guerrillas with no control over the "political line." Thus, Yon Sosa (retaking the MR-13 title that had never been officially dropped from within his front) broke with the PGT - FAR coalition, rejecting any reformist line or conciliation with the bourgeoisie, and asserting MR-13's authority over the rural guerrilla movement. Initially Turcios Lima reluctantly supported this break with the PGT, but only a few months later (early 1965) he rejected the MR-13 strategy and moved the FGEI back under the authority of the PGT (the FGEI being then the only FAR column). Given Turcios Lima's reliance on the PGT / urban network this move was not so surprising, but it left the rural guerrilla movement (and the urban student movement) divided in terms of coalitions, tactics, and revolutionary ends.

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[353] FGEI moved through the departments of El Progreso, Izabal, Zacapa, Chiquimula, Jalapa.
[354] Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, (1971), p. 2 / 28.

In retrospect this acrimonious breakup may be best described as a vicious power struggle that pitted a misconception of the rural countryside (by supporters of MR-13) against a misconception concerning the urban classes (by the PGT).[356] Certainly the MR-13 (and the FAR) had overestimated the possibilities for broad - based revolution emerging in the countryside, as well as revolutionary support in the capital from urban workers (whose reformism was accurately observed by the PGT). Outside of a sector of Izabal, the MR-13 had little support except for a weak urban front in the capital (involved in bombings and propaganda work). The base of the FGEI (or FAR) support, though broader in terms of area, was less enduring in the south - east (than MR-13's) and incursions into the agro - export sector, i.e. Escuintla, Alta and Baja Verapaz, Suchitepéquez, had not been successful in establishing local support for the FAR guerrillas.

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[355] See for example Louisa Frank, "Resistance and Revolution," NACLA, (1974) p. 181 - 184.

The PGT, which consistently had a more astute understanding of the urban classes, also set itself up for a tragic mistake. While the PGT held more firmly to promoting a reformist agenda behind a "national - democratic bourgeoisie," viewing the armed struggle as an important aspect of the "anti - dictatorial / anti - imperialist" struggle, the PGT misjudged the changing character of its own supposed urban middle class and "nationalist" allies. In this respect the PGT overlooked the intimate connections that had emerged between the middle class political parties, the technocracy, and the military (working instead with a more clear - cut "civilian - military" distinction) as they condemned the political parties for their "collusion" with the dictatorship (notably the PR) and perceived the military as simply a repressive instrument in the service of U.S. imperialism and the oligarchy. Under the dictatorship the capital was beginning to be rapidly transformed as an economic expansion was generated through the CACM and foreign industrial investment. This accounts for several changing factors: the ability of the military dictatorship to advance socio - economic reforms through state spending (ending the period of austerity); the stronger relationship being developed between the middle class parties and the military; and the "reformism" of the urban labor movement premised on visible economic growth / employment (public and private sectors). Except for the university the PGT had weak links to other urban sectors, and this more secure reformist "bloc" in the capital was to be more willing to physically eliminate the PGT rather than expand the "democratic" sphere to allow more radical political agendas to be articulated.

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[356] The depth of the acrimony was expressed when it was rumored (presumably by the PGT) that Yon Sosa was actually a C.I.A. supported operative, which was practically a "death sentence" given the concerns of the guerrilla movement at this time.

The Emerging Antithesis: Reformism Confronts Revolution

By 1965 the Peralta dictatorship had ratified a new constitution and electoral reforms, scheduling elections for the national assembly and the presidency between the MLN, PID and the PR. In the ensuing race for the presidency, Mario Méndez Montenegro died mysteriously (officially declared a suicide) and his brother, Julio Méndez Montenegro (a respected university law professor) became leader of the PR. Julio Méndez Montenegro, considered a defender of socio - economic reforms, and Clemente Marroquín Rojas, the nationalist editor and publisher, were chosen respectively as presidential and vice - presidential candidates for the PR. The PR campaign utilized the new openness to criticize the repression and policies of the prevailing dictatorship (of whom Rojas had been a prime target for his vocal denunciation of the dictatorship). The PR portrayed itself as advocates of the "third government of the revolution" (after Arévalo and Arbenz) and thus appealed directly to reformist and nationalist sentiments. While propagating a "class - dependency" understanding of the post - 1954 period (U.S. - oligarchic - military domination), the PR channeled this critique of contemporary Guatemala into a reformist rather than a revolutionary agenda.

The PID, behind military candidate Colonel Juan de Dios (director of INTA under Peralta) also advocated economic development, social reforms and "nationalistic" policies but its creation under the Peralta dictatorship left the party vulnerable, as it would not attack the dictatorship. To the party's credit at this time it rejected an alliance with the MLN, the PID refusing to accept as a presidential candidate the MLN's openly hard-line and anti-Communist choice of Colonel Miguel Angel Ponciano.[357] The oligarchic MLN advocated little but a promise to have forcefully eradicated the guerrillas after five months in power, and restructuring the existing reforms and state intervention in the economy. The MLN, refusing to recognize the urban and rural Ladino demands for modernization and reforms, fully marginalized itself from the open and competitive electoral scene. The PR and the PID pushed the reform line, but only the PR was able to argue that its leader was not tarnished by complicity with the repressive dictatorship. Consequently, the obvious urban popularity of the PR platform led the PGT to distance itself from the "armed struggle" in support of the PR's efforts to become elected. Then in February of 1966 (one month before the election of March 6) Rojas called for agreements with the guerrilla forces to bring about peace and stability in the nation, stating that "[T]omorrow these bandits, as has happened before, will be converted into heroes and liberators."[358]

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[357] It is apparent that the various reformist options lacked clearly defined ideological platforms as Colonel Lucas Caballeros was chosen as leader of the Christian Democratic Party after his own reformist party was not given official status. After the Christian Democratic Party failed to become officially recognized, the PID proposed Caballeros as a presidential candidate. In the end, Caballeros endorsed the PID candidate despite the fact that the CD party told its supporters to invalidate their ballots to protest the dictatorship turning down their application for official party status.

The nationalistic and reformist momentum of the PR party was a decisive blow to the guerrilla movement (particularly the FAR) once the PGT and other left parties (Villagrán Kramer's URD party) threw their support behind the candidacy of Julio Méndez Montenegro and the PR party. No one had expected the dictatorship to allow such an open and confrontational electoral competition. Initially Turcios Lima and the FAR rejected the PGT decision, but then conceded and advocated support for Méndez Montenegro. This about - face was justified in the belief that the U.S. - military - oligarchic coalition would never permit the PR and Méndez Montenegro to assume office, thus putting the "revolutionary agenda" on a new footing once an electoral fraud had been perpetrated (and endorsed by the U.S.). Hostilities and military activities by the guerrillas were ended as the electoral campaign proceeded. This concern with electoral fraud was also expressed by the leadership of the PR, fearing the dictatorship would give the election to the PID (not the MLN). Just such a context appeared to be emerging when after the elections of March 6, 1966, the electoral tribunal refused to release the official results until March 12, at that point declaring Julio Méndez Montenegro and Marroquín Rojas official winners and giving the PR a majority in the Congress. Lacking a popular majority, the PR - dominated Congress ratified Montenegro and Marroquín to their offices in May and they became president and vice - president on July 1. Politically the MLN had been humiliated, electing only five congressmen.[359]

Considerable speculation surrounds the six - day gap before election results were officially released in which Colonel Peralta conferred several times with Méndez Montenegro, "secret deals" with the military were concluded, and as a consequence the military supposedly "gutted" the ability of Méndez Montenegro and the PR to proceed with substantive reforms. In retrospect, though, the PR was able to solidify its authority rather than have it diminished, backed by threats from Marroquín Rojas (through his newspaper) of taking up arms to defend their victory.

> Finally, amidst more tension than that preceding the election, Peralta decided to adhere to his promise to allow the election, whatever the outcome, to stand. Several secret conferences then took place between Peralta and Julio Cesar Méndez Montenegro. The PR agreed not to allow extremists in the government; Peralta agreed to a military reorganization which would retire 200 of the 400 army colonels. The PR considered this a necessary

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[358] John Sloan, (1968) p. 29.

[359] The MLN blamed its loss on the military dictatorship for not giving the Christian Democratic party official status which would then have split the left - centre vote to the advantage of the MLN. The PR won 30 seats and the PID 20 seats.

> condition to forestall a possible military coup. Peralta then visited personally with several important military figures to convince them the PR victory did not constitute a threat to the armed forces and to impede any attempt of a coup by military partisans of Ponciano.[360]

This deal more clearly favored the PR as military figures that posed a threat to the PR were decommissioned.

Much has been made of the "secret" pact Montenegro and Rojas signed with the military high command (publicized by Rojas in the early 1970s), which supposedly increased significantly the military's autonomy and political role, particularly in dealing with the guerrilla movement. The pact itself was not that controversial as it basically reaffirmed the principles established between the military and the "revolutionaries" of 1944. The military was granted continued authority over its own affairs, i.e. promotions, training, legal action, and pledged its duty to uphold the constitution. Such a condition was not controversial for Montenegro, who throughout the election had been careful to distinguish between the dictatorship and the military as an institution, criticizing those military figures in the dictatorship for tarnishing the image / prestige of the military. Montenegro and the PR had never envisioned or pledged itself to increasing civilian control over the military. In fact, more than ever it needed the support of the military against a right - wing desirous of disrupting the PR's reform project. What has led critical observers to speculate that the military's position vis - a - vis civilian forces became enhanced was the ruthless manner in which the PGT and the guerrilla forces were dealt with under the Montenego administration.[361] What is inaccurately assumed here is that the PR sympathized with the revolutionary agenda of the guerrillas and that Montenegro lost control over the military leading to his reformist agenda being undermined. This assumption exaggerates two important factors, one being Montenegro's (and the PR's) commitment to radical reforms, of which they held none; and the second was that it was possible to differentiate a PR civilian agenda from a military agenda, which it was not possible to do. The PR under Mario Méndez Montenegro had distinguished itself by its collusion with the Peralta dictatorship, supporting the coup and ratifying the new constitution and electoral laws. When the PID affirmed the PR victory, receiving important committee postings in the Congress, a more fortified civilian -

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[360] John Sloan, (1968) p. 23. At this time "colonel" was the highest rank one could achieve, the rank of "general" removed in 1944 (but reinstated in the early 1970s). Montenegro's excellent relations with the military during his term in office are confirmed by Susan Berger's interview with the former president during the 1980s (even though Berger cannot agree with him as her perception of the military is one of an institution anti-thetical to the PR reform agenda), S. Berger, (1992) p. 142.

[361] See for example Howard Sharkman, "The Vietnamization of Guatemala," in NACLA, (1974) p. 195 - 197.

military reformist coalition came to power, but it extended no committments to radically expand the political sphere to embrace the PGT or other radical or reformist options.

The PGT and the FAR held no illusions about the limited "reformism" of the PR and Méndez Montenegro but their previous evaluation had been incorrect. Montenegro and Rojas were confirmed as president and vice - president and the PR members took their seats in the Congress. As the PR presidency and congress became established (between March and July) the revolutionary initiative lost its momentum and the PGT suffered a devastating setback. Just prior to the March 6th election, some 28 leaders / members of the PGT had been captured by the security forces and "disappeared." In response the FAR kidnapped several high - profile political figures in an effort to have the PGT individuals released. Despite this hostile atmosphere, Montenegro pledged that the disappearance of the PGT figures would be officially investigated (which it never was) and upon assuming the presidency (on July 1st) he offered an amnesty to the guerrilla forces. The guerrilla forces rejected the amnesty, determined to fight on to achieve their revolutionary ends. Their cause appeared partially vindicated when Montenegro released his agrarian reform program in August putting forward only further colonization of El Petén, the transfer of state owned lands to individuals, and increased levels of credit / aid to small landowners.[362] The guerrillas committed themselves to major structural change in the rural countryside, a project they were then convinced could only be achieved through a full scale social revolution (both FAR and MR-13).

During the period of amnesty (that lasted for two months) a major exchange of views took place through the press, the FAR delineating its revolutionary position and reasons for continuing with the armed struggle. The press and reformist politicians countered by arguing that the guerrillas had played an important role against the dictatorship, but it was time to give the reformist agenda a chance. The previous validity of the "armed struggle" had evaporated as fraud - free elections signaled a "new era" of reformist politics, economic progress and social peace. The PR, emboldened by the support for and legitimacy of its government, was not going to endure for long any armed forces committed to social revolution. As the amnesty period ended in early September, Marroquín Rojas went a step further by publicly denigrating the military for failing to deal with the guerrilla forces effectively.[363] In an inflammatory editorial Rojas excoriated the military for maintaining a defensive position versus the guerrillas and argued that the guerrillas only existed because the military did not want to, and had never wanted to fight them, since they emerged in 1963. Criticizing press editorials that suggested the PR was "weak" in resolving this issue, Marroquín Rojas passed the blame onto the military and raised the stakes by claiming that if the guerrillas won it was wholly the fault of the military. He then stated that he had issued an ultimatum to the military, giving them three months to "clarify" this situation at which point it would be apparent who was the stronger armed presence in the nation. Clearly Montenegro and the PR (via Marroquín Rojas), concerned about "peace and stability," were not going to concede to any guerrilla proposals / demands that (however marginally) contested their certitude on what was best for Guatemala and they endorsed a major rural offensive against the guerrillas. Once the "dictatorship" had passed, the reformist middle - class political parties were as antithetical to revolutionary change as the political right. What fortified this position was their faith in the industrialization process underway in the capital and the new accommodation between those middle - class sectors that were benefiting from this diversification and growth.

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[362] S. Berger, (1991) p. 142 - 143. CIDOC, Guatemala: La Violencia (Part II). Dossier No. 20. (1968) p. 4 / 4 - 41.

[363] Clemente Marroquín Rojas, "Es inexplicable el proceso de nuestra política." La Hora. (Sept. 14, 1966), reprinted in CIDOC, Guatemala: La Violencia (Part II). Dossier No. 20 (1968) p. 4 / 63.

In October of 1966 the military launched what was to be a series of ruthless offensives against the guerrillas in the Ladino southeast.[364] It was in this period that the military exercised a combination of tactics that were to become the hallmarks of the Guatemalan military. One tactic was to utilize brutal forms of torture, assassination and violence against communities / individuals the least bit suspect of complicity with the guerrilla forces. A second tactic was a willingness to rely on, arm and organize civilian sectors considered loyal to the military's efforts, granting these civilians incredible powers of arrest / execution (whether larger landowners, commissioned officers, local police forces). A third tactic was to implement "civic action" programs administered by trained military personnel (engineers, instructors, doctors, dentists). These included supplying to local communities medical services, educational programs, technical support (in agriculture), installing water / electrical services, constructing roads / buildings and propagating the "material" benefits of supporting the military. The first tactic had been the sole method (applied erratically) by the military between 1963-66 against the guerrillas, and had served to only antagonize the rural Ladino population of the southeast. This seems to have been the preferred strategy among the older members of the officer corps, but the emergence of a more diversified and better trained military establishment brought forward younger officers favoring a more comprehensive strategy.[365] This strategy, due to the heightened organization and broader application involved in its use, served to increase rather than diminish the level of violence despite the important "development" component.

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[364] On October 2, 1966, shortly before the major military offensive in the south - east, Turcios Lima died in a traffic accident just outside of Guatemala City. Representing the heights of "petit bourgeois" hypocrisy, the press and political figures lamented his death and he was venerated as a "national hero" for his struggle against the dictatorship as the military initiated the first of a series of brutal offensives against his forces and supporters. He was replaced as FAR leader by César Montes.

This three - part military strategy was particularly devastating for the FAR's areas of operation, where the method of "armed propaganda" had left the rural population unorganized and unprepared for the military offensive. As the military presence expanded along with the repression, the FAR's weak support base rapidly capitulated. Larger landowners in particular did more than give up the guerrilla cause, becoming important instruments in the counter - insurgency strategy by providing information to the military and forming para - military organizations. Students, who had previously sojourned to the Ladino southeast, backed away from the risks related to the military's vicious offensive. It was under these conditions that the FAR and the MR-13 attempted to unite and determine a reaction to this military onslaught, but the military had the initiative on its side. In terms of material support, weaponry, and personnel the military had the advantage, along with its ability to control the rural population (in several ways) and full civilian political support from the capital. This left the guerrilla forces with little room for maneuverability since for several years it had been common knowledge where the guerrillas operated. By the middle of 1967 the FAR's activities were terminated in the southeast. The MR-13 persisted until the end of 1967 until its activities were ended in the department of Izabal. By 1968 the FAR and the MR-13 had but small groups of loyal supporters in the capital. The rural guerrilla strategy utilized in the Ladino southeast had failed completely. Despite what had appeared to be an extended period of guerrilla "successes," when confronted with a determined offensive by the military the guerrillas had neither the forces nor the rural support to maintain its presence. The rural countryside of the southeast had not supported a revolutionary movement despite the favorable economic conditions, and the guerrillas were never able to penetrate this region again.

What shocked many observers of this period was the violent tactics employed by the military and para - military forces, tactics that were obviously endorsed by the elected civilian government of Méndez Montenegro to restore "peace" in the country. Never had such an expanse of rural territory experienced levels of military force to this degree, with publicized accounts of 100s of tortured and mutilated bodies appearing throughout the south - eastern countryside between 1966 and 1968.

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[365] See CIDOC, Guatemala: La Violencia (Part III), Dossier No. 21 (1968) p. 4 / 100 - 103.

> There does not exist objective statistics that allow establishing with certainty the number of persons killed in the first wave of terror. The statistic most worked with is 6,000 victims, given by sources of the left and employed by the national and international press and the political parties. TIME magazine calculated only half of this statistic, specifying that of the 3000 killed only 80 had been extremists. Tabulations with deaths identified fully arrived to 703 by the Guatemalan Committe For The Defense of Human Rights and 438 by the author.[366]

Certainly at the time even these figures were considered significant, particularly in light of the prevailing reformist and civilian administration, but they were to pale in comparison to the horrors inflicted upon the Maya highlands only some 12 years later.

Generally recognized as the first "wave" of state terror in Guatemala, it is apparent that the civilian government accepted the brutality of this strategy against the guerrillas as a necessary evil to secure peace in the country and proceed with economic development (public / private capitalist development). The fact that through the election considerable support had been given to this reformist agenda only served to "legitimize" and enhance the "rightness" of what was considered just a temporary measure. What the PR had not counted on was that the repressive structures accompanying this modern counter - insurgency strategy were to have an unexpected permanence that was to bring "la violencia" into the heart of the capital.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented a set of arguments and evidence that is distinct from the generally accepted understanding of the Guatemalan political scene in this period, specifically the socio - economic conditions for "revolutionary success." It is this perspective, though, that establishes a more accurate context from which we may begin to examine the dynamics that were to lead to the extreme violence in the Maya highlands by the late 1970s. There is little in the historical record to suggest that the oligarchy or its political expression (the MLN) were determining the political - economic agenda of the nation with the support of the military or the U.S. Rather what had emerged by the late 1960s was a more diversified and complex coalition of lower, middle and upper class Ladino forces (urban and rural) whose reformist tendencies were legitimized through the expanding economy and elections. The civilian - military distinction had become extremely biurred, to the degree that important reformist civilian sectors supported and relied on the military institution to advance their reforms and the military was to expand its role in Guatemalan society via this reform project. Only by recognizing this inter-play is it possible to explain the political events and economic changes of the 1970s.

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[366] Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, (1971) p. 7 / 16.

This chapter has also begun to critically examine what has most often presented itself as the most glaring contradiction in Guatemala: an impoverished rural majority contrasted with a small oligarchic elite, and hence the theorization concerning a favorable revolutionary setting. What we may more accurately describe is a rural setting comprised of several socio - economic and ethnic configurations that do not lend themselves easily to either reformist or revolutionary activity. In fact this rural diversity, in which economic insecurity abounded, reinforced an unwillingness to become politically active or organized. Consequently the reformist, but particularly the revolutionary urban forces, were extremely limited in their ability to build a broader popular following from the majority residing in the rural countryside. I would argue that such difficulties only served to strengthen the derogatory and denigrating stereotypes urban middle class Ladinos held towards both the Ladino mozos and the Maya generally, when in fact the existent rural economic relationships were the root cause of a persistent "conservatism" or apathy among the rural poor. This political climate further weakened a divided political left (between reform and revolution) accounting for a willingness on the part of moderate reformers to ally themselves closely with the military rather than to involve themselves in the long and arduous task of reforming the country "from below."

Perhaps the most important insight to be drawn from this chapter is that the political left in Guatemala was not able to forge itself into a united and coherent political alternative. Rather, like the political right, it fragmented completely along several competing reformist and revolutionary projects, and somewhat ironically it was the military dictatorship that forced some degree of unity upon the left. Unfortunately though, this revitalized reformist sector (in the end) did more to destroy the revolutionary and radical democratic sectors than either Ydígoras or the Peralta dictatorship had ever contemplated or attempted.

Chapter Five

The Military and the Maya (Part I): The Preconditions to a Massacre

The period of 1968 to 1982 in Guatemala is of considerable interest in that the political or "state" form that emerged in this time frame has defied scholarly classification. It was neither a personalistic dictatorship (Nicaragua) nor military dictatorship (El Salvador, Honduras) as there were regularly held elections, party competition, changing administrations, open press, and significant levels of civilian participation in all levels of government. Nevertheless, the preponderance of military officials holding positions of public office (elected or appointed) along with persistent concerns about electoral fraud and military violence make it impossible to suggest that this was an effective democratic process, despite the important civilian participation. The one constant in this phase was the Institutional Democratic Party (PID) as an elected entity, but this party always ran for office in varying coalitions involving other major and minor political parties, never as a single entity.

Most critical observers on this time period have categorized Guatemala's politics as dominated by "right - wing / reactionary elite" coalitions backed by the military (and the U.S.).[367] Such a broad characterization fails to explain the infinite internecine conflicts among the shifting coalitions. Furthermore, the designations of "right - wing" and "reactionary" do not explain the dominance, versus the supposed subordination, of the military in advancing profound economic changes via the state against the interests of the most entrenched and privileged sectors. The problem generally with understanding this period is related directly to our perception of Latin American military institutions, particularly militaries with a record of exercising excessive violence, their behavior most often attributed to the protection and defense of long established elite interests. What has been lost in this form of analysis is the idea that state violence may be utilized as aggressively by "progressive" classes intent on significant change as those sectors who have something to preserve. This perspective more accurately considers how and why the Guatemalan military entered into a prolonged assault on the Maya majority, an assault that was to continue unabated throughout the 1980s.

By the late 1960s the Guatemalan military had become fully immersed in the politics of the Ladino middle class forces promoting the diversification and modernization of the Guatemalan economy. Since 1944 the military had done more to protect and enhance these reformist forces than has been recognized or admitted by observers, the evidence belying the commonly - held impression of the military as simply a "lap dog" to U.S. dictates and / or a reactionary elite. For the numerically small and economically weak middle classes of Guatemala this affiliation had been, and was to remain, a complex "love - hate" relationship with the officer corps of the military. On the one hand, for these middle classes the military provided the stability and security necessary for them to proceed economically and politically within a dependent capitalist formation and against the small but influential coffee oligarchy, the perceived (but nonexistent) "threat" from the rural Maya majority and, more often than not, against forces from within their own ranks (whether guerrilla leaders, university organizations, or alternative political parties). Furthermore, the military held the technical - administrative skills and labor - material resources with which to organize and advance the infrastructure necessary for capitalist diversification (commonly referred to as "national development"). On the other hand, such an alliance entailed ceding significant degrees of civilian authority over to the military at several crucial levels, one area being the full autonomy the military continued to exercise over its own "internal affairs," free from any civilian influences or oversight.

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[367] See, for example, Edelberto Torres - Rivas, "Guatemala: Crisis and Political Violence," in SCAAN (1983), p. 38 - 39; George Black et. al. (1984) p. 26 - 27; Susanne Jonas (1991) p. 87 - 94, 115 - 123.

More importantly, though, because Guatemala was undergoing a process of rapid economic expansion and diversification, in which the military was an active proponent, within the larger context of society no enforceable boundaries or barriers existed as to what were proper or improper spheres for military participation or authority. As the middle class "state development" project encompassed more regions and activities within the country, military personnel were to be found either involved in or at the forefront of all aspects of national development. While various middle class sectors were periodically to chafe at or contest what appeared to be a pervasive military presence into almost all spheres of government and society, they were not willing to relinquish their intimate links with the military by virtue of it being the strongest (if unpredictable) ally of the middle classes given their fears, whether economic, cultural or political, vis - a - vis other elements in society. Consequently, Ladino middle class thinking throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s straddled these two irreconcilable sentiments. For reasons that will become more apparent in the following account, this contradiction stemmed from the fragmented character and general economic weakness of the Ladino middle class itself. As a result, the Guatemalan military took on a seemingly "grandiose" presence relative to its middle class ally, a position that, once acquired, it has been loath to surrender.

The above synopsis has been put forward in a general manner as it lays the bases for understanding the broader political configurations, debates and violent conflicts of the 1968 to 1985 period in Guatemala. The initial intention is to establish a construct, rather than a single causal explanation, that from the beginning is discernible and separate from analyses that have attempted to explain the violent behavior of the Guatemalan military. These previous positions have made reference to either external agents (namely U.S. training and aid within the parameters of the Cold War) and / or the military's supposed reciprocal alliance with a broadly defined "reactionary oligarchic elite" (the military seen as getting a "piece of the action" to assure its loyalty).[368] While both theories mentioned certainly hold an element of truth, they also apply in varying degrees to all of Latin America and the Caribbean, neither of them grasping the "specificity" of the Guatemalan setting that was to earn the Guatemalan military the title of "worst human rights violator" on the continent by the late 1970s / early 1980s.[369] What will be highlighted in this chapter is the significance of a particular matrix of contradictory and antagonistic ethnic and class forces within which the military acted, allowing it to acquire a heightened "autonomy" or "presence" relative to other institutions, actors, or social classes (a condition that persists to this day). Simply put, the military's eventual omnipresence was due to the specific society it acted within, a society defined by an identifiable set of ethnic, regional and economic contradictions and inequalities. Such an analysis represents a departure from existing explanations primarily because the Guatemalan military is understood as a dynamic faction of a larger and emerging social class intent on restructuring the nation economically and socially, not as a "retrograde" and "reactive" force defending a set of entrenched interests (whether U.S. or oligarchic). It is the "specificity" of these societal dynamics within Guatemalan that is of primary concern in this and the next chapter, demonstrating that an identifiable set of economic alliances and regional - ethnic characteristics peculiar to Guatemala underlay the extreme political violence of the military in this period.

The Fragmented Character of the Ladino "Middle Class"

One characteristic of the Ladino middle class that was to favor the dominant position assumed by the military was its extreme fragmentation. In terms of economic activities it had become visibly divided among a diverse set of interests across the rural countryside and within the urban areas (primarily Guatemala City). As a consequence, the politics that emerged were a highly conflictual expression of this economic diversity, a diversity that was itself favored and promoted ever since 1944 in an effort to reduce the nation's economic dependence on coffee and banana production. What no one had anticipated in the promotion of this economic diversification, which had a significant impact in both rural and urban areas, was the types of conflicts and fierce political divisions that were to emerge from this rapid economic transformation. The fact that the Guatemalan economy was still sustained largely by the agricultural sector, albeit a much more varied agricultural sector, only served to aggravate and increase the fragmentation among rural and urban Ladino economic groups.

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[368] The first position is more strongly advanced by such scholars as J. McSherry (1990), M. McClintock (1985), Noam Chomsky, Year 501. (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1993), while the second may be found in the works of Edelberto Torres - Rivas in SCANN (1983), George Black et. al. (1984), Susanne Jonas (1991).

[369] And certainly the competition for this title was stiff in this period given the well documented atrocities committed by the Chilean, Uruguayan, Argentinian, Salvadorean and Colombian militaries.

In the rural areas the middle classes produced a variety of agricultural products (the majority for export) such as coffee, sugar cane, cattle, cotton, grass oils, wheat, vegetables (and later tobacco and cardamom). Only the coffee industry was dominated by a well - organized national body, representing long - established oligarchic interests who took it upon themselves to speak on behalf of all coffee producers. The other producers tended only to be represented by numerous regionally based, sectoral bodies, which were to ally at different times over particular issues with other producers. A smaller percentage of Ladino middle class occupations existed through the administration of each department (education, health, state infrastructure initiatives) or other positions in the various military bases across the country. Due to the diversity displayed in rural production, the variations by region in terms of what was produced, and the unequal development of infrastructure between regions (whether old established regions or newly opened areas), the concerns and demands of these various constituents varied according to the set of problems faced by particular sectors in specific regions. This fostered a high degree of sectoral "parochialism" in the rural areas versus the more "general" or "national" interests being expressed in the rhetorical and ideological debates in the capital. While the coffee oligarchs had a "national voice," they were not able to represent this broader agricultural diversity whose specific needs were often distinct from those of the coffee industry. The coffee oligarchs themselves were severely weakened and in decline given the rise of numerous rural and urban economic interests with new demands on the state.

In Guatemala City the urban forces were also visibly divided. There were the manufacturing and industrial sectors; financial and banking sectors; commercial, import - export, and small business sectors; and foreign corporate subsidiaries, none of which held a "hegemonic" or dominant position vis - a - vis the other sectors. This was further complicated by the fact that a diverse set of primary agricultural activities were still of paramount importance in generating hard currency returns, and were generally not subordinated to an agro - industrial sector. Guatemala's "dependent" status had fostered a conservative banking sector, much of it of foreign origin, unwilling to assume the risks associated with numerous speculative ventures (many of them agricultural) that had arisen or were to arise in this more diversified economy.

Consequently, the state was the critical juncture of all these conflicting economic - regional interests and demands not just for infrastructure but for preferential regulations / taxation, short and long - term financing and subsidies. It is the matrix of Ladino economic activity, rural and urban, that is the key to understanding the politicals and state form of the 1970s period. Since no economic sector led in national importance over all other economic sectors (as coffee and bananas had once done), a political rather than an economic solution arbitrated all these contradictory interests, namely the military. The military was to rise to prominence then due to the fact that the middle classes were so irreconcilably varied and divided, not because of any insatiable "will to power" from within the military or on the part of certain military officers. Had these rural / urban middle classes been more united, or if one sector had successfully forged a coalition with other sectors, the military would not have been able to assume this role. In light of this fragmentation, itself an expression of the varied but contradictory economic forces in place (revealed through the relative equal strength of different political parties), the military became the only institution whose authority most sectors were willing to accept. Since the authority of the military was a purely "political" compromise, the military became deeply enmeshed in every conflict and debate.

While it may appear to external observers to be unlikely that Guatemala's middle classes would grant such powers to the military, and more acceptable to affirm that the military simply usurped this role of its own initiative, it must be remembered that the military in Guatemala had by the late 1960s cultivated a fairly impressive list of achievements positively affecting these numerous middle class sectors. During the Peralta dictatorship and after, officers of the military had demonstrated a strong commitment to economic expansion and diversification i.e. "national development," a competence in technical - administrative matters in both rural and urban economic development, and had proceeded unencumbered by the acrimonious conflicts that seemed to reappear under civilian administrations and perpetually between the political parties. With the purge of "hard - line" or "reactionary" officers (or forces antagonistic to the PR) at the time Méndez Montenegro assumed power, the military was firmly in the hands of "progressive" elements. These "progressive" elements were not beholden to the coffee oligarchy, as is often assumed, nor did this authority pass to an unskilled and corrupt entity. It was under these circumstances that the military not only assumed the role of "mediator," but also created its own economic and political "turf" within the expansion and diversification of the national development project it was promoting generally. It was not granted a "piece of the action" by more powerful economic forces, i.e. the oligarchy, but became an independently established economic faction by virtue of a political "autonomy" acquired relative to every other economic sector.[370]

It is within these dynamics, the military as a middle - class modernizing force and the military as an emerging economic force in its own right, that we find the momentum that was to carry this institution into direct conflict with the Maya majority of the highlands. As of the late 1960s, though, these two dynamics were still in their infancy since the northern highlands and El Petén were only just beginning to be placed within the larger vision of middle - class "national development." The state itself had not expanded its activities to encompass this larger tract of national patrimony nor had the middle class - military alliance come to fruition. It was the perceived failings of Méndez Montenegro's presidency and the PR majority that were to solidify this relationship, thus more firmly establishing a larger civilian consitutuency behind the military.

The Unexplored Terrain: The "Politics" of the Ladino - Maya Dichotomy (1970s)

The military - middle class alliance, that was to effectively obliterate the "civilian - military" distinction, took place in lieu of several other alternative scenarios for political coalitions. It is here that the Ladino - Maya / urban - rural division provides several insights as to why the military - middle class alliance arose and was sustained rather than other possible alliances. By far the largest portion of the population in the 1970s were the Maya peoples, distributed across the rural regions of the country and recognized as "different" by the self - identified Ladino population. Since the 1940s, though, Ladino middle - class thinking about the Maya had changed very little in its perceptions and assumptions, and in fact "modernization" theory (in anthropology and sociology) had done more to "scientifically" confirm than deny long - held Ladino perceptions concerning Maya "primitiveness" or "barbarism," perceptions that remained unaltered by the advent of the Marxist and class - dependency perspectives. Although the language had changed, from "mestizaje" (1920s - 1930s) and "Ladinoization" (1940s - 1950s) to "integration, acculturation, or proletarianization" (1960s - 1970s), the message was still the same: the Maya culture must be destroyed if the Guatemalan "nation" is to advance.[371] No sentiment more firmly united Ladinos across economic classes and the political spectrum than this one, and ironically it has been the one aspect of Guatemalan political - economy that has been the least examined with critical reference to the "political" significance of this ethnic division.

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[370] On the military as an economic entity, see G. Aguilera Peralta (1981), J. Handy (1984), Michael McClintok (1985), J. Handy, "Resurgent Democracy and the Guatemalan Military," Journal of Latin American Studies. 18 (1986) 383 - 408, and James Painter, Guatemala: False Hope, False Freedom. (London: Latin American Bureau, 1989).

[371] By this time numerous American anthropological works on the Maya and Guatemalan society had been translated into Spanish, fostering a "liberal - modernization" scholarly sector within Guatemala. As Marxists and class - dependency scholars emerged and took exception to the "modernization" assumptions

What has remained of interest about this "oversight" is that we are not discussing a tiny minority relegated to marginal "reserves," but an identifiable, denigrated and despised majority. When it is recognized that there is a disproportionate level of wealth and power exercised by one ethnic group over and against the other, then the racist dimensions of this subordination become apparent. With such a configuration, it seems evident that a pronounced and extensive societal division must act upon and structure the "political sphere" of Guatemala in several ways, particularly since ethnic separation was the "a priori" or the "given" within which Ladino political debates and conflicts manifested their meaning and content. It must be acknowledged that an ethno - political inquiry into Ladino - Maya relations is speculative in places due to the broader generalizations utilized, but nevertheless can be substantiated by the historical record through a variety of sources. It is this unexplored "racial" aspect of Guatemalan politics that I believe more fully explains the dynamics and conflicts of the late 1970s and early 1980s in Guatemalan society, marking the distinctiveness of this period of history from previous phases of violent conflict, military dictatorship and guerrilla activity.

It must be observed initially that while "racism" is not uncommon across the globe, as Frantz Fanon observed it has different qualities / characteristics depending on whom the racism is directed against, Fanon himself differentiating "white" or European racism against "Arabs" and "Negroes" from the "anti - Semitism" analyzed by Jean Paul Sartre.[372] While the supposed classic case of a "racist state" similar to Guatemala is South Africa (a black majority dominated by a small white minority), the South African state was a rather unique creation since the racism of the white majority was formalized into a set of viciously enforced laws that ascribed economic, social and political roles for each ethnic group in the country. What was particularly repugnant about the South African case was the overt and callous enforcement of the discrimination. In other words, no one had bothered to mask or conceal the racism of the white elite behind a "liberal" constitution or legal premises proclaiming the equal rights and

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of these works, few from this more radical wing were to question the efficacy of eradicating the Maya "culture" as a prerequisite to either "social integration" and / or "revolution."

[372] Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks. (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

opportunities of all citizens of this country. Consequently, the legally instituted racism and the concomitant exploitation and immiseration of the majority were strikingly apparent.

Far more common, though, particularly across Latin America, was (and is) an informal but nevertheless as pervasive and effective discrimination / racism against the indigenous population. Guatemala is unique in Latin America to the extent that the native population comprised such a large percentage of the overall population (Bolivia being the only other nation with comparable figures, followed by Peru and Ecuador). The racism was informal in that neither the constitution nor the legal system ascribed any special treatment or privileges to the Ladino minority. Rather, it was expressed through a variety of Ladino institutions, practices and sentiments, all of which served to affirm the separateness, distinctiveness, and advantage of being "Ladino" versus "Indian." No one recognized this more clearly than Carlos Guzmán Böckler and Jean - Loup Herbert, whose collection of essays more than demonstrated the continuing relevance of the ethnic division in Guatemala and attempted to identify the form and depth of this racism as of the late 1960s / early 1970s.[373]

J. L. Herbert, observing that "racism" is a "social product" or societal construct, noted that it was "eminently variable in its forms and content and depends on the social structure which determines it." Hence, while "racist" practices generally may have a set of shared characteristics, it is the particular economic, social, and political history of a social structure that will give the racism practiced in a nation its particular form and content. For J. L. Herbert, the Guatemalan nation held all the general characteristics, from the colonial period to the present, of a racist nation with respect to Ladino attitudes and actions towards the Maya:

> ...*racist attitudes*: incomprehension, paternalism, unfavorable prejudices, physical repugnance, fear and distrust, contempt, hostility, hatred; *and racist acts*: discrimination in employment and living, physical segregation in certain places or times, obstacles to mixed marriages, provocation, jokes, exploitation, violence.[374]

Recognizing that in Guatemala there were no legally sanctioned divisions, Herbert offered a penetrating insight as to why South African - style racist structures were not present, nor necessary, in Guatemala.

> In Guatemala ... though the actual legislation contains discriminatory features, it is not the most important now that after four and a half centuries as much the economic and social structure as the collective conscience assures the permanence of the discrimination without

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[373] Carlos Guzmán Böckler and Jean - Loup Herbert, Guatemala: una interpretación histórico - social. (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1970).

[374] Ibid., p. 132.

> needing institutional help. When the endogamy and the economic barriers function almost perfectly, neither laws nor openly racist expressions are needed.
>
> The fact that they have defended at various times 'the absence of discrimination in Latin America' does not seem to us a sound argument: on the contrary, these verbal justifications (very partial and stereotypical moreover) conceal the "perfection" of the economic, social, and geographic discrimination that by its same perfection does not need to be reinforced with laws and argumentation. When, at times, the system does not function with total perfection, appears, as have noted various authors, other types of more explicit barriers.[375]

These "explicit" measures, in reference to more overt and violent forms of confrontation, most strikingly revealed the depth and breadth of the Ladino - Maya separation in Guatemalan society throughout the 1970s. Generally, though, the system worked to "perfection" as Herbert claimed, through a Ladino consensus both supporting and being reinforced by institutional - intellectual constructs that permeated Ladino social life.

Perhaps no other aspect captures the depth of the division maintained between Ladinos and Maya than the language casually employed by Ladinos to describe the national majority.

> This annoying and repeated enumeration of epithets one encounters nowadays, for example, the novel by Monteforte Toledo, *Between the Rock and the Cross*, lists with much exactitude an anthology: 'this swine, group of lazy assholes, good - for - nothings, stupid asses, they are clever these miserable swine, those people are worse than animals, those people have no sense, Indian bastard, scared Indian, they bring sickness and make it worse with the sloth and the filth' .... We are able to add expressions heard like 'sexual perverts, they're like dogs, have to instruct and clean up the Indians in order to mend this savagery, they are no use to Guatemala nor as fertilizer, they are false, liars, always they say *yes*, Guatemala is not able to develop with this damned (wicked) race,' etc. All this is said innumerable times, in particular by intermediaries (leaders, finca administrators, municipal secretaries). Many priests conserve the idea that their mission is to civilize these idolaters or pagans. All this it is possible to sum up in two observations that captures them all: 'Indio,' that in the daily language is synonymous with fool, brute, idiot, animal (idea of inferiority) and in its extreme, presents the idea of an obscene insult; 'Indito,' utilized as the idea of being weak (feeble, dim), incapable, and poor. [376]

As observed by other authors, this language and perception penetrated right down to the poorest sectors of Ladinos whether *mozos* of the southwest, Ladino peasants of the southeast, or the urban poor of the capital. They may be poor or destitute, but they weren't "Indian," denoting at one level that their economic condition did not in any way prevent them from identifying with the more "civilized" sectors of Guatemalan society.[377]

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[375] Ibid., p. 125, 133.

[376] Ibid., p. 131.

[377] See Carlos Figueroa Ibarra (1980), and Severo Martínez Peláez (1983).

While Marxist scholars attributed this behavior to a form of "false consciousness" that simply had to fade in significance, since "proletarianization" necessarily entailed an increasing "class" over an "ethnic" conscience, what they overlooked was the real or "objective" advantages that still accrued from this form of identification. What this "identity" turned on was one's ability to speak Spanish fluently, and in a society as divided as Guatemala this "advantage" was not negligible, particularly if one was poor. This language skill had several important dimensions that procured a different societal treatment in relation to more powerful Ladino institutions and classes. At an economic level (in the rural areas) it ensured a certain privileged status if one worked in the agro - export sector (as labor supervisor, driver, machine operator) rather than the base tasks of picking or cutting. In the urban centers and rural areas one was able to procure one's own employment without being dependent on "bi-lingual" intermediaries (that were often a costly venture for the Maya). Beyond this level though, there was a certain degree of both apparent and real security that came from one's ability to speak Spanish as one necessarily related to a whole set of Ladino state institutions. The more "apparent" security came from being able to understand and take part in identifying with the more dynamic, progressive, and obviously powerful ethnic group in society through a varied medium (radio, newspapers, conversation), thus accentuating the knowledge / power gap between poor Ladinos and the Maya. Real security, however, came from the ability to act on a more equal footing with other Ladinos (whatever their socio - economic status) given one's linguistic access to local - national political figures, police, lawyers, different organizations and state agencies. Unlike the vast majority of Maya, these institutions and actors did not confront Ladinos as imposed and wholly antagonistic structures, and accounts for the often recognized feature that poor Ladinos were more willing than the Maya to verbalize and confront abuses of power (though not always with satisfactory resolutions).

There is no doubt that this Ladino advantage had over time altered the behavior of the agro - export landowning class, which preferred "native labor" since the Maya were less likely to react violently against abusive treatment. The difference, of course, lay in the fact that a Ladino landowner (or supervisor) could physically assault or murder a native in broad daylight without fear of retribution, an unlikely scenario against a Ladino worker, a feature both Ladino and Maya laborers surely recognized. Such passive Maya behavior, rather than being "cultural" (as was often suggested) simply reflected the broader avenues of appeal open to Ladinos, whether legal or political. Hence, this continuing ethnic allegiance was not an expression of "false consciousness" but a clear expression of just how badly the Maya were characterized and treated by a broad set of Ladino institutions and economic practices. After over one hundred years, it was not lost on the Ladino poor that no matter how miserable their condition, they were "objectively" better off than their Indian counter - part. It also could not have been lost on these sectors that economic diversification and expansion (in state institutions, agriculture and industry) was taking place to their advantage and not to the Maya. The system, then, was still rife with distinctions that accrued advantages by virtue of being Ladino, no matter how petty some instances appeared from without.

While we may observe a socio - economic rationale to the Ladino poor affirming and maintaining the salience of the Ladino - Maya division, the same does not apply to the middle class intellectuals - politicians who jettisoned all logic and fact in order to uphold this racist distinction. Their societal analysis, though, represented a more sophisticated assault against the Maya in terms of how the Maya "presence" limited the "national" potential.

> In intellectual and political circles the Indians are the cause of the 'backwardness' of the nation, the 'dead weight' for development. As Biesanz observed and we have heard various times, some affirm in private that it is a pity that the Indians have not been swept away or inundated by a flood of European immigrants. M. A. Asturias, in 1923, sustained in his thesis for law that the solution to the 'indigenous problem' was a 'massive European emigration in order to mix with the Indians.' It even arose to speak of the 'castration' as a solution to the problem, being a most exact scientific expression of the intensive plans for family planning. It is possible to fill, very easily, a book containing these types of observations but we hope that what is said is sufficient to affirm that since the colonial period until today, the spontaneous expression of the social conscience is racist.[378]

Certainly different Ladino intellectual sectors were not beyond elaborating "grand utopian" schemes, lacking any moral or humanitarian substance, in dealing with the "Indian question." As J. L. Herbert further observed, this ingrained racism led to the most incredible mental contortions among Ladino intellectuals in an effort to defend such concepts as "Ladinoization," "acculturation" or "social integration," citing as an example the distinguished Guatemalan sociologist Monteforte Toledo.

> In Guatemala, where the reality is too contrary to the supposed acculturation, the application of the concept leads to huge mistakes. The fincas, the *repartimiento*, the missions, are interpreted by Monteforte Toledo as instruments of acculturation and at the same time are the causes of the poverty, of dictatorship, of the cultural destruction, and of the ignorance. The same author, with a certain degree of masochism, concludes, 'Nevertheless, the Spanish introduced in the New World a true revolution that worked as a factor of acculturation. The wheel, the vehicle, the animals for work and transport, the irrigation and the fertilizer .... they diminish the differences between the two ethnic groups and stimulate the fusion that culminates in the culture that today we call Ladino.' In the extreme, we observe that the

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[378] C. G. Böckler and J. L. Herbert, p. 131 - 132.

> concept of acculturation inverts all the history of Guatemala, permitting against all logic, to justify the domination of a minority over the majority.[379]

Thus, intellectual discussions on the "Maya issue" were permeated with highly unstable and contradictory evaluations of the "national history" in relation to the present. As Herbert demonstrates, this thoroughly contradictory mentality was justified with reference to the worst idealism, the firm belief that the Maya culture could be eradicated to everyone's benefit.

The academic works by American anthropologists from the 1940s onwards in many ways only served to reframe the debate and refine the language of established Ladino sentiments. While previously the ideology surrounding the "mestizaje" and "Ladinoization" had been rather crude constructs, the discussion surrounding "acculturation" and "social integration" meshed neatly with the modernization (and later Marxist) theories and visions of the Ladino middle class. There was, then, a certain inevitability to the demise of Maya "culture" since the features of an industrializing society necessitated this outcome, and who could question the benefits of a modern society? What was most bizarre about this premise was that there was no evidence to suggest that the "state" or "governments of the day" were doing anything to foster this "acculturation" or "integration." Neither meaningful education facilities nor socio - economic assistance were available to the Maya. For most it was extremely difficult if not impossible to acquire rudimentary skills in Spanish. One did not have to look far to find a partial rationale for this consistent state behavior, as the Maya remained an inexhaustible source of cheap and passive labor in the all important agro - export sector. While ongoing abuses of the Maya may have been lamented, they were not contested, being a facet of a pre - industrial society that would eventually dissipate. Such thinking pervaded Ladino sentiments on these issues, and since it took place within the context of denigrating stereotypes it justified and supported a paternalistic - authoritarian approach to dealing with the Maya or "national majority."

Where these intellectual currents crossed directly with the state was through the National Indigenous Institute and community development services, which J. L. Herbert noted "cruelly reflect the structure of political and economic power."[380] While the anthropology in these political institutions clung to the illusion of "neutrality," Herbert observed their profoundly conservative character expressed in a rejection of "grand changes," fear of structural change, the promotion of small or incremental changes, emphasis on the small - singular community, and no hierarchical identification of the causes (such as the socio - economic reasons for the natives condition). This "indigenismo" or native expertise based its philosophy on the "substantiation of the difference," that Herbert notes was marked first by the "dehumanization or alienation" of the Maya in order to establish and justify the discrimination:

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[379] Ibid., p. 145 - 146.

[380] Ibid., p. 156.

> The Guatemalan National Indigenous Institute, in a recent brochure, *Why the indigenismo is indispensable*, made evident in an extreme manner this reasoning when it affirmed 'the indispensability of a very special relationship .... taking into consideration the impermeability of the mind of the Indian: The Indian continues, for decades and for centuries, believing in many gods, fearing many supernatural forces and individual human powers ... elements totally conformist, without major ambitions or aspirations that stimulate him to leave this state of waste that he maintains ... the Indian was converted into dead weight by the social, economic, and cultural development of the Latin American nations.' Logically the conclusion is, 'and after analysis, a certain paternalism is also justified ... in the integration of this ethnic group to the national culture.'[381]

As may be observed, these branches of government played more of an ideological role than an actual service role in relation to the Maya population. More importantly, though, what is totally missing from this discourse (identified by Herbert) is any thought that the Maya peoples themselves should have some say or input within the sectors of government that were supposedly intended to serve their interests.

The derogatory stereotypes and the appeal to a continuous paternalism were not just representations of "racism," but a conscious effort to ensure that the Maya remained "depoliticized," acted upon but not actors, objects not subjects, no easy task in a nominally democratic nation where the Maya were the clear majority. Consequently, it was at this conjuncture that other, more powerful Ladino institutions played a decisive role in maintaining the pacification of the Maya. Again, what often were deemed as Maya cultural attributes, i.e. fatalism, lack of dignity and mistrust[382] could be traced directly to a pervasive set of Ladino practices (economic and political) of unrelenting subjugation, mistreatment, marginalization and exploitation. Ironically, as long as this enlightened paternalism remained the official practice of Ladinos towards the Maya, it was to distort and deform the functioning of the very institutions (military, legal, bureaucratic, political parties) that were intended to serve the Ladino middle class itself. Whatever the merits of "acculturation" or "social integration" might have been, they were wholly lost when simply utilized as a justification for maintaining the accepted "ethnic separation" and the advantages that arose from this distinction.

The distorting of Ladino political institutions took place at many levels, but was most apparent in the concentration of Ladino political forces in the capital, representing the "civilized" center in relation to the "barbarism" that surrounded this Mecca (whether one headed west, east or north from the capital). Having in mind this dichotomy, Ladino political parties related to the Maya accordingly, never failing to disregard specific "Maya concerns" or the general discrimination practiced at every level of society. This was backed by an electoral system where party candidates for national office did not have to be residents of the electoral district, the urban party doling out rural ridings to its party members, thus maintaining a highly centralized party system. Hence, all nationally elected political posts continued to be held by Ladinos. The election campaigns themselves, throughout the highlands or other Maya regions, were little more than one - time, arranged, pep rallies (if they occurred at all), most candidates not even bothering to have a bilingual interpreter to ensure that their "message" was delivered in the local language.[383] Reliance remained on local Ladino landowners, business figures, and labor contractors to buy or coerce the local native vote through a variety of means (jobs, money, alcohol, threats, voter round ups on election day).

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[381] Ibid., p. 156 - 157.

[382] A list of these "cultural attributes" from Guatemalan and foreign anthropological / sociological studies are noted in Ibid., p. 126 - 130.

After elections, the Ladino representatives had absolutely no reason to be accountable to their "ridings," thus exacerbating both the "meaninglessness" of the electoral process for the Maya and the urban - rural and Maya - Ladino separation. So deep was the racism that no Ladino political party could ever imagine an electoral strategy base on the long - term organizing and identification with the plight of the Maya majority. Rather, in progressive urban quarters, a latent fear and contempt always surrounded the "rural vote" which seemed to be consistently channeled towards "conservative" or "right - wing" candidates, thus acting as a "brake" on the progress of the nation. This combination of contempt and ignorance only served to alienate the Ladino political parties from a much larger political constituency (and diverse "politics") and, I would add, strengthened their rapprochement and alliance with so - called "progressive" sectors of the military over broader forms of political organization.

It is within this racist matrix that the military secured its preeminence in Guatemalan society, particularly at a time when the society was undergoing rapid social and economic change. It is this aspect, more than any other, that underlies and strengthens the earlier reference to the "love - hate" relationship between the military and the middle class. It was (and is) within this relationship between the Ladinos and the Maya that the military played a pivotal role in providing the supposed physical, economic, intellectual and cultural security against the threat from the "Maya presence." The incomplete "pacification" of the Maya (or concealed history of

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[383] See Helen Carawan Corpeño, "The Role of the Indian in the Guatemalan Political System, 1965-66." (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1968)

Maya resistance) was, as J. L. Herbert noted, revealed through a long but sporadic history of native uprisings violently repressed by Ladino forces.[384] Such persistent expressions of "Maya hostility" only confirmed the need for a strong military presence despite the distorting influence of the military in the political sphere. We might add the supposition that the Ladinos (and particularly the middle class vision of "democracy") were reconciled or even predisposed to direct military political participation as long as there was a Maya "culture" to contend with. If the Maya were responsible for the "backwardness" of the nation, which included a certain "political backwardness, " then they (by their existence) were responsible for the strong military presence required in the country. The military's actions, in light of the experience under the Peralta military dictatorship, had led to some rebuke by sectors of the Ladino population, but its brutal relationship with the Maya majority went unquestioned or reflected upon by Ladinos.

The Guatemalan military symbolized and mirrored in its organization the larger society with the difference that the military had gone that extra step and "perfected" the relationship with the Maya in the eyes of Ladinos. A small Ladino officer class presided over Maya "recruits" (the term itself a misnomer) in a strict and ruthless manner that compelled the broadly desired "cultural" change.[385] While all Guatemalans were supposedly required by law to complete a one to two year military service, this "duty" fell almost totally upon young Maya males who were subjected to a system of forced recruitment. They were unceremoniously rounded up within their communities at gun point, and trucked away to distant training bases, a practice Ladino communities or Ladino families did not have to concern themselves with. In contrast, the military's methods with respect to this vast supply of Maya "volunteers" had the continuous advantage of inculcating fear and terrorizing the larger Maya population, a fear that was taken right into each Maya family. Once "in the army," Maya recruits underwent an intensive and brutal six week training in the Spanish language (the use of any native languages being forbidden), were forced to abandon all native attire and religious practices, and had little or no contact with their communities until their service ended. As the most violent form of "acculturation," one can only imagine the physical / psychological trauma associated with such a process of Ladinoization in which "being Indian" was held out as a symbol of contempt and the focus of unrelenting degradation. They only survived, literally, by totally renouncing and rejecting every aspect of their "identity" that they had known until this point. Once their military service was complete, these young Maya men found it extremely difficult to reintegrate themselves within their communities. In many cases this inability to readjust was expressed through continued military service, becoming commissioned officers or local "ears" for the police and military security forces. They became the people the military could "trust" within the thousands of communities that the military was not able to penetrate by other means. This process of recruitment (imprisonment), acculturation (cultural extermination), and military loyalty (local surveillance) went on wholly unquestioned or unexamined in Ladino circles, as these practices provided the necessary security and requisite "civilizing," regardless of the trauma inflicted upon the Maya individuals and communities. At a deeper socio - psychological level, it may be said that it demonstrated to Ladinos that they were very much "in charge," still in control of the destiny of "the nation," and able to control the fate of the Maya majority.

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[384] Ibid., p. 158.

[385] Michael McClintok (1985). "Testimony of Pedro Luis Ruiz," in Susanne Jonas et. al., (1984), p. 69 - 72. Cindy Forster, "A Conscript's Testimony," in Report On Guatemala. 13, 2 (Summer, 1992), p. 6 - 7, 14.

We have, then, fairly strong confirmation of J. L. Herbert's claim that the "racism" in Guatemala had been "perfected." This racist ideology must be viewed, though, as more than just a functional defense of a set abhorrent economic practices (despite being established through these practices) since it was accepted by almost all Ladinos, many of whom had no direct economic interest in the subjugation of the Maya. With the diversification and specialization of the economy, the expansion of the Ladino middle and lower classes, the broadening of state activities, and the growth of the media and intellectual positions, the racist ideology assumed a certain degree of "autonomy" having become independent of a specific set of economic interests, i.e. the coffee oligarchy. This alteration had two contradictory aspects. This discourse, expressed through a variety of political - intellectual positions, allowed for the first time a certain "space" to be created within which the Maya (through their emerging cultural, intellectual institutions) could articulate a dissenting or alternate understanding of their past and present experience. Although this "space" must be acknowledged, it must also be recognized that within the larger Ladino consensus with respect to the "native" or the "Indian problem" (the problem seen as lying wholly within the Maya sphere of activity), opportunities were minimal at best for Maya intervention. Hence, this broader Ladino discourse from a diversity of sectors (including debates, scholarly research, press editorials) served to legitimize the racist ideology and maintained the advantages of ethnic division. A freer and more open exchange of opinions had not altered the basic premises of the debate on the Maya, and in fact the very existence of a "discourse" had strengthened to some degree the certainty of the racist ideology. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the politically charged "nationalistic" rhetoric that had been advanced since 1944.

The Maya As Other In the Ladino Nationalist Discourse

I have documented a whole set of "intellectual" constructs and social practices that permeated Ladino thinking and acting, establishing the context in which Ladinos related to the Maya majority as of the 1970s. What has remained unexamined within this matrix is how this racist ideology overlapped with the often recognized virulent form of "nationalism / anti - communism" of the military, Ladino middle and lower classes, and more important economic sectors (rural and urban). While "anti - communist - Cold War" rhetoric flourished throughout Latin America, and particularly among the various military institutions, one could not help but notice that in Guatemala it had a deeper "cultural" significance. Numerous scholars had observed over time how the anti - communist rhetoric became a constricting force within the political sphere, but as the above commentary on the Maya - Ladino separation reveals, there were more salient factors underlying the "problem of democracy" in Guatemala over which hovered the "communism / anti - communism" division. On the surface the discourses surrounding the caricatures of being either "Indian" or "communist" would appear to be distinct, but what I will argue is that among Ladino sectors these discourses overlapped, fostering a set of derogatory images that were perilous for the Maya majority by the late 1970s.

While the dominant linguistic - ethnic groups in all nations make "nationalistic" appeals in a typically "us" (ours) versus "them" (theirs) understanding of their history and culture, in Guatemala the magnitude and repercussions of this type of identity formation were far more divisive internally than in most other nations. Guatemalan "nationalism / patriotism" expressed highly exclusive sentiments intimately tied to the "Ladino identity" and their historical understanding of themselves, to which the Maya majority could not be a party since the "Ladino identity" was largely defined in opposition to what the Maya supposedly represented in the "imagination" of the Ladinos. In the "nationalist - patriotic" discourse, expressed through a number of official - religious "national" celebrations, an irreconcilable dualism concerning the positive and the negative in their history permeated the Ladino understanding of their history and identity. On the one side it was a conquest history from the arrival of the Spanish to the present, invoking the names of several conquistadors and the fact that the power of the Spanish Crown and Catholic Church had emanated across the isthmus and into Mexico from the former Guatemalan capital of Antigua.[386] Inescapably, though, this colonial history included a list of famous battles (massacres) that brought about the subjugation (enslavement) of the Maya peoples, a subject people that remained highly visible in the nation. The post - independence period, in which Guatemala was a "conservative" bastion against "liberal" integrationist ideals, was largely forgotten in celebration of the "liberal" modernizer Justo Rufino Barrios (1873-85) whose dictatorial rule unfortunately established the often - lamented domination of the coffee oligarchy with its corresponding dictatorial tradition (until 1944) and accompanying large - scale destruction of Maya communities.

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[386] The "tragic" ending of the conquistador Pedro de Alvarado was repeated and revered as a national metaphor.

Although Ladinos took "pride" in this long history of Spanish success over the Maya, when it came to the practice and defense of "liberal - democratic" principles or events or actions that had brought the Maya and Ladino people together under one banner, there wasn't much (if anything) to choose from in the historical record. Consequently, Spanish - Ladino national struggles and successes had always taken place at the expense of the Maya peoples, barely concealing the vicious figures or practices that made up this "heroic" national identity. No one wanted to recognize that these two facets, the heroic and the barbaric, were clearly one and the same, as this critical reflection would irreparably damage the Ladinos' understanding of themselves. While it is easy for an "outsider" to make this observation and suggest that a more fruitful path for real national reconciliation lies in the Ladinos coming to terms with their history, it must be recognized what this entails, as it has numerous ramifications given the manner in which this Spanish - Ladino consciousness has been formed. At its most devastating (after nearly 500 years of persecuting the Maya) it entails suggesting that the Spanish - Ladino heritage is ethically bankrupt, their history (and their understanding of it) repugnant, and by extrapolation, that there is something fundamentally "wrong" with their being in Guatemala. Certainly Ladinos themselves cannot be faulted any more than other nations for mythologizing, sanitizing, and purifying their understanding of their national history. What is being emphasized, though, is that this particular interpretation, in contradistinction to the still flourishing Maya majority, had (and has) a significant bearing on Guatemalan politics.

Certainly conquest histories, particularly in discourses relating to native Americans (North and South) are not uncommon, but in Guatemala it remained (for lack of a better expression), an extremely incomplete "conquest." Unlike the U.S. and Canada where the native people's economies had been destroyed and the native people removed physically and then historically from the unfolding of national events (to the extent that their continued presence played no role in national issues or debates of this century), in Guatemala the Maya economy, culture, and languages persisted with considerable vigor. Consequently, as of the 1970s, the Ladino identity / national conscience still lacked the political certitude (historical, moral) that would have been attained had the Maya culture been extinguished. This uncertainty - instability was only further complicated by the more "democratic" credentials and aspirations of the Ladino middle and lower classes whose retention of the conquest history (with its celebration of various conquistadors and caudillos) meshed uncomfortably with the liberal - democratic ideals that had been articulated since 1944. The latter was still clearly subservient to the former in relation to the "Indian question." Since for obvious reasons the Maya could not revel in this national liturgy, they were not considered Guatemalan nationals or "full citizens" of the national patrimony. They were, by virtue of who they were, the Other (or the foreign) in the Ladino conscience, a sentiment that was only exacerbated by the proximity and sheer numbers of Maya peoples within the national boundaries.

The continued presence and high visibility of the Maya continued to evoke, then, a particular Ladino response which C. G. Böckler referred to as a "fear of a vague and imprecise enemy." As he observed, this was expressed through a tendency among Ladinos (and particularly those on the political right) to "search" for a strong Man to govern, whose supposed virility and paternalism was often confused with an individual who humiliates, attacks, tortures, and prevails by a power based in arbitrary acts. By the 1970s, though, it was evident that the caudillo tradition characterized in this sentiment had passed. What is interesting about this insight at this time is that it recognized the lack of, and desire for, some level of cultural - political security among Ladinos, a security that since 1944 had seen the "strong man" largely supplanted by the "strong military." Hence, the contradictory views and sentiments that surrounded past caudillo figures now surrounded Ladino thinking and debates concerning the role of the military in Guatemalan society (and not incidentally, this institution exemplified the same contradictory qualities / understandings as the former caudillo tradition in Ladino discourse). As noted, this "search" was rooted in a deeper "fear" which Böckler succinctly captured in the following observation.

> There are other collective Ladino representations that it is possible to link with the previous. For example, one much diffused throughout the nation consists in prophesying that 'one of these days the Indians are going to come down from the mountains and kill us' .... The real fact is, that in the profundities of the Ladino conscience, the Indian is inevitably present, but in the form of a collective shadow (darkness), recriminating and threatening. This situation contributes to maintaining a stable crisis of identity by the Ladinos; their contradiction is, then, the stability of their instability.[387]

While a combination of socio - economic advantages, an assumed "natural superiority," and general ignorance rather than historical experience fueled this perception, it is evident that the collective conscience of the Ladinos (and this particular brand of Ladino nationalism) was replete with deeply held stereotypes and fears concerning the national majority. This served to justify a whole series of derogatory caricatures (intellectual and popular) and reprehensible political - economic practices directed at the Maya. Guatemalan nationalism, then, justified an extreme form of "internal repression." This dimension though was wholly lost in the changing theoretical discourse from "modernization" to a "class - dependency" perspective. Nevertheless, Guatemalan "nationalism" was highly compatible with this theoretical innovation given the "dependency" perspective's interpretive variation within Guatemala.

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[387] op. cit. p. 108.

Guatemalan "nationalism," particularly the version with an "anti - imperialist / anti - U.S." thrust, had predated the general scholarly acceptance of the "class - dependency" perspective by some 25 years. It is this time lag that helps in explaining why the "nationalist" terrain in Guatemala was not the exclusive territory of the political left (and specifically the revolutionary left). Whereas in the cases of Cuba and Nicaragua, the revolutionary and intellectual left had appropriated the nationalistic and anti - imperialist discourse and put it towards socialist ends, in Guatemala "nationalism" (or a "nationalistic" discourse) pervaded all political stripes as a continuous response to the "Maya culture." In fact the strongest "nationalists" were solidly located in the anti - communist (but liberal / authoritarian - developmentalist) camp, represented by such figures as Juan José Arévalo, Clemente Marroquín Rojas, and Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes. Only a small sector of the extreme right (the MLN) considered Castillo Armas a "nationalist" (instead of Colonel Jacobo Arbenz), and the 1944 Revolution was a "national" celebration, not the 1954 "U.S. intervention." Given this particular intellectual heritage, the class - dependency perspective, with its critique of U.S. imperialism and First - Third World trade relations, in no way contradicted or "threatened" the thinking of the Ladino press, military, political parties, and intellectuals. No one denied the interpretation of the class - dependency perspective or that Guatemala had significant problems to overcome (Indian and otherwise), but only a very small percentage saw it as being rectified through a socialist revolution and / or an isolationist development path. In the eyes of these Guatemalan nationalists, the country had noticeably changed for the better since 1944 when the state - capitalist project was initiated (Juan José Arévalo being recognized as the "father" of Guatemalan "democracy" and still a prominent figure who could mingle with generals, landowners, and political elites, and preside over "national ceremonies" and command important foreign postings).

Ladino nationalist rhetoric, then, was situated within this triad of internal / external "threats" that included the Maya, the U.S. (and Britain on the Belize issue), and "communists" (Cuba, the PGT, and the various guerrilla groupings). This is what gave Guatemalan (or Ladino) politics its peculiar and contradictory character which could never adequately be captured by the class - dependency perspective, since the latter emphasized a "popular class" (nationalist in character) confronting a denationalized elite that was largely dependent on the U.S. As is more apparent, the "popular class" conception in Guatemala was irreconcilably divided between the Ladinos and the Maya, the Maya having only the vaguest conception of what the Guatemalan "nation" was, and no understanding or sympathy with the Ladino identity, while the Ladino "nationalists" had been or were, by and large, all staunch "anti - communists" and in power. Throughout the 1970s these different Ladino "fears / threats" were to emerge either singularly or in combination as a challenge to this brand of "nationalism." Of these, the growing perception of a "communist - Indian" threat was to prove to be the most serious as it played on the two great "unknowns" that confronted "la patria," and involved stereotypical caricatures that overlapped and reinforced Ladino suspicions at several levels (the U.S. and Britain being entities that were better understood if not particularly trusted).

What the "communist" and "Indian" caricatures shared in relation to the Ladino nationalist identity was a sense of being Other or "foreign." The justification for constitutionally outlawing "communism," which had been in effect in some form for most of this century, was that it represented an ideology "foreign" to the history and traditions of the Guatemalan nation. Those individuals identified as "communists" (whether university students / professors, guerrilla groups, members of the Guatemalan Worker's Party) were often viewed with a critical paternalism, seen as duped by foreign agents, juvenile in behavior and beliefs, or "delinquent," but not "political." At a very general or abstract level, the Maya majority stood in the same proximity to the Ladino identity, eliciting the same mixture of pity and contempt (with the possibility of "redemption"). They also shared the quality of being "out there" and persistently "threatening." Maya "otherness," or the discourse that had signified the particular qualities or "nature" of being Maya versus Ladino, had for many decades taken place in the form of diametrically opposed referents that contrasted the "civilized" Ladino with the primitive barbarity of the Maya. Maya "otherness" had the quality of being anything a Ladino was not (or a Ladino was what an "Indian" wasn't). Ladino virtues were comprised of characteristics that extended into several social spheres (economic, cultural, linguistic, religious, political). Ladinos were Spanish speakers first, superior (even biologically in some Ladino discourses), assertive, dominant, individualistic (as opposed to communal), ambitious, achievers, dignified, true Catholics (as opposed to superstitious / animistic), and civilized (thus worthy of emulation). In contrast, the Maya (characterized by a series of real and imagined qualities) were typified as non - Spanish speaking, inferior, irrational, submissive, undignified, subordinate, little individual initiative, communal, superstitious (or bad Catholics), secretive, lazy, untrustworthy, ignorant, and thus, lacked the capacity to participate in a whole set of "national" achievements both historical and cultural. As we have seen, several of the more derogatory references were "scientifically" defended, whether through foreign or Guatemalan social sciences. What is of interest here is the fact that this set of stereotypes overlapped in several important respects with what had become the caricature of a "communist" in Guatemalan discourse, propagated by the Catholic Church, the press, political parties and various Guatemalan nationalists. Communists were atheists (anti - Church), collectivist, ruthless, dishonest, conspiring, secretive, and a hostile force that threatened the nation from within and without. They were not true "nationalists," were against "civilization," and could not be accommodated as a political entity by virtue of these characteristics. By this same logic and similar set of referents, Maya "politicization" (or signs of overt disagreement with the Ladino system) were deemed unsavory, threatening, and dealt with forcefully, as they questioned the rightness of Ladino actions, behavior and institutions as did the Communists. It is this interplay between "Indian" and "Communist" stereotypes that facilitated an almost cultural fixation by Ladinos with the "communist threat." In both cases they represented a "political threat" to the Ladino nation and an easily identifiable target for the various problems the nation confronted.

Up until the early 1970s, there existed only a few overt references to this overlap, representative of the fact that political conflict among Ladinos had not directly involved the Maya highlands or the Maya peoples. One of the more infamous statements, though, had arisen during the Ydígoras Fuentes administration in the early 1960s when the government's reasons for not constructing schools and attempting to eliminate illiteracy in the countryside were that "[F]undamental education and the campaign against illiteracy are the best methods for the indoctrination of international communism," and that "if the Indians learn to read, they will be open to degradation by the Cuban propaganda."[388] The statement is of interest since it clearly demonstrated not only a Ladino fear and contempt for the Maya, but was also strong evidence that the government lacked any commitment to "acculturation" or "integration" at its most basic level.

The persistence, though, of this thinking during the 1970s was revealed through a series of editorials in the national paper Prensa Libre in reaction to a very modest plan for native education and "indigenous self - awareness" proposed by the Federation of Private Universities of Central America (FUPAC).[389] The proposal called for the creation of an "indigenous university" in which scholars would extend to the rural indigenous populations the basic elements of analysis from which they would be able to explicate their conditions, and the university able to identify specific problems of being "indigenous" in the Central American region. The announcement of this proposal had followed an editorial in the paper in which a columnist had commented on the indigenous opposition to any "progress" and their strong tendency to maintain a state of underdevelopment.[390] The reply by Antonio Saravia started by observing that "[T]o those of us that have experienced living there in the mountains, this reluctance by the 'inditos' to evolve positively is well known," but he felt that it was not accurate to say that the Maya did not want progress. For Saravia, although the good and generous intentions of state officials had failed (or been refused), Guatemala's democracy and "state of law" provided the protection the indigenous needed to progress. The idea, though, that the indigenous should be encouraged to conserve and affirm their identity was considered but a new communist tactic for revolution based on race rather than class. As the columnist affirmed, "[T]he national preoccupation must be oriented in an opposite direction; towards the ethnic and cultural homogenization," and this position in no way contradicted his conviction that "[F]ortunately, in Guatemala, there has not existed a conscious racial discrimination despite all the pseudo - scientific work written to demonstrate the contrary, but now is the hour to intensify the publicity in favor of a new and more realistic attitude opposed to the 'Indians'." Saravia's views were shown to have much larger, intellectual and institutional, support.

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[388] C.A. Hauberg, "Changing Conditions in Guatemala," Current History. 44, 258 (Feb., 1963) p. 109, and K. S. Karol, "El Ejemplo de Guatemala," Política. 2, 38 (Nov. 15, 1961) p. 27.

Shortly after Saravia's column, a response was printed from Dr. Epaminondas Quintana (ex Director of the National Indigenous Institute), who agreed with Saravia that there was considerable evidence that the "Indians" wanted to progress, but only a certain degree of progress, accepting just some "modifications."[391] Dr. Quintana proceeded to list the types of technological - economic advances that had occurred in several communities of the highlands, resulting in higher levels of agricultural production, and concluded by stating "What more do we want?" In further agreement with Saravia, Dr. Quintana let it be known that the idea of an "indigenous university" was not just "nonsense" but a real political threat to the existing system:

> As for an INDIGENOUS UNIVERSITY, it is not only a blunder but a platform to yield upheaval to the system, and that from suffering aborigines they will become unhappy

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[389] "Sugieren Crear la Universidad Indígena," Prensa Libre, 24 October 1973.
[390] Antonio Saravia, "Indigenismo Positivo," Prensa Libre 5 November 1973.
[391] Dr. Epaminondas Quintana, "El 'Indio' Si Progresa," Prensa Libre. 21 November 1973.

> collectivists like the poor Russians, Chinese, Cubans, or Czechoslovakians, where they constructed the 'paradise of the workers.'

There was nothing subtle in these Ladino observations that education for the Maya and signs of a "Maya affirmation" were tantamount to either "communist" complicity or expressions of "communism" itself. What is also readily apparent is the deluded idealism (observed by Böckler and Herbert) that underlay the thinking of these urban Ladinos in relation to the Maya, as they talked of democratic values and generous intentions while young Maya men were being forcibly removed from their communities to serve in the "national" army or hundreds of thousands of Maya families suffered cruel indignities in the agro - export fields. Nevertheless, this reaction to such a minor agenda foreshadowed how Ladinos were to react to signs of a Maya "assertiveness," an assertiveness that was to surface as a result of the Ladino military - civilian expansion directly into the Maya highlands.

By far, though, the most overt manifestation of this "anti - Maya / anti - communist" conjuncture in theory and practice was the military itself. As discussed previously, the military, through its recruiting practices and forms of military training adhered to a vicious program of "Ladinoization," which took place in conjuncture with a vehement Cold War "anti - communism." While the latter aspect (with specific reference to the U.S. role) has been well documented, the Maya - Ladino / Maya - military antagonism becomes more visible in light of the above analysis, establishing a broader context and specific character unique to Guatemala for understanding the debates and conflicts of the 1970s and 1980s. From our earlier understanding of the broad links the military had forged with the highly differentiated middle class, it is possible to envision the complex character of the military itself which a more single - causation explanation i.e. U.S. imparted "anti - communism," does not capture. As the class and ethnic dimensions are brought together with regional and political considerations, there is a deeper understanding of the "specifics" of the Guatemalan context.

While "communism" was, without question, a paramount concern of the Guatemalan military (as with every other military in Latin America) in Guatemala its significance was enmeshed with a much larger and visible "cultural threat," whose actions were continuously monitored and kept in check through a variety of measures. This important mandate underpinned the military at a time when the military - middle class alliance was about to launch a most aggressive "state - capitalist" expansion, unprecedented in its dimensions and impact, I would argue, since the expansion and consolidation of the coffee industry in the late 1800s. What made this second phase of capitalist expansion unique was the extent to which it involved all of the national territory. For the first time, grand designs of radical and imminent social and economic change emerged from several Ladino sectors with respect to the Maya highlands and El Petén. As observed though, this dynamic was to take place within the confines of a still entrenched ethnic division, where signs of Maya assertiveness or affirmation were met with Ladino hostility and derision of the worst sort. What gave this state expansion its violent momentum was the extent to which the military was involved in the planning, execution, and administration of this dynamic in the interests of a larger Ladino middle - class and, for the most part, against the Maya. The military was critical to the success of such a venture if social and economic change was to occur without any noticeable alteration in the politics of the class - ethnic division. It alone had the force of its "presence" to minimize reaction (particularly Maya) and "impose change" at will within such a comprehensive state strategy. Why such a dynamic emerged in this time period (the late 1960s) will be examined next.

The overview of the practices and "images" that constituted the Ladino - Maya division in Guatemala as of the early 1970s provides an alternate context from which to examine the events of the 1970s and 1980s. J. L. Herbert had observed that a solution to the "Indian problem" lay in the transformation of the thinking and practices of the Ladinos, and not the Maya. As of the early 1970s, though, nothing of consequence had occurred to upset the certainty of the Ladino position vis - a - vis the Maya. Despite the noted "threat" supposedly emanating from the "Maya hordes," the Maya as a people were not constituted as a unified entity internally except in the "imagination" of the Ladino populace. Consequently, the Ladinos were not under any compulsion to transform or revise their understanding of the Maya, particularly in a period when the Ladino economy and state were undergoing significant and profound expansion and diversification.

The Intellectual Dimensions of the Guatemalan Military

Due to the military assault on the Ladino southeast, followed by intense violence in the capital during the late 1960s, most observers within and outside of Guatemala had come to view the military as solely a reactionary and repressive instrument that acted on behalf of a vaguely delineated "oligarchic elite" and was supported / financed by the U.S. This led to the impression that the military's continuing "power" or dominance within Guatemalan society simply lay in its ability violently to repress different sectors of the population. While clearly the security forces of the military did have this function, such a characterization is an incomplete account of the military that provides few insights into the thinking and actions of the military as an institution. At another level, this "standard account" concealed the eclectic socio - economic and ethnic divisions reflected in the military and the varied linkages it had with different economic sectors that either created support for, or fostered accommodation with the military. Given the complex array of ethnic and economic relations across the national territory and the ongoing process of economic diversification, it is more evident that the military's dominance persisted due to the fragmented nature of Guatemalan society rather than any "superior" qualities internal to the military itself, such as a willingness to be more repressive when deemed necessary, being better trained or equipped, or having superior counter - insurgency skills. The military itself thrived on a threatening and imperious image derived from its social condition and repressive role, further increasing its sense of purpose and arrogance due to fortunes that accrued from operating within an incredibly divided social formation.

Although the scholarship on Guatemala is most accustomed, particularly in light of the 1966 - 68 campaign against the guerrillas, to view the Guatemalan military singularly as a repressive and violent instrument of the state, it has not been inclined to analyze the military (and its civilian allies) as comprised of a well - educated and well - trained intellectual and technical (even cultural) elite. Whereas the lowest rungs of the military hierarchy were occupied by forcibly recruited Maya males, there was considerable competition from upper to lower middle class and working class Ladino youth (urban and rural) for opportunities in officer and cadet training, which in fact offered one of the better educations available in the country. Beyond the potential for a good education, (including advanced degrees in business, law, medicine, and engineering, possibly from foreign universities), the military offered a host of benefits that were not readily available in civilian society. Among these were secure employment for life, health care (for extended family), subsidized foreign goods through military commissaries, housing, pensions, and opportunities to travel (overseas posts / military training). There were also numerous domestic high profile appointments to be had (from department governor or base commander to defense minister) in addition to diplomatic and military postings abroad. Considerable prestige, such as press coverage and official ceremonies, accompanied such achievements and it was not lost on anyone that the military opened up the possibilities for elected political positions and a standing in society. Since the 1930s the officer class of the military had changed from being the exclusive domain of the landowning oligarchy, broadening its Ladino class composition and expanding its technical - professional training. As of the mid - to late 1960s the military was directly involved in the implementation of several major "development" projects introduced under the Méndez Montenegro administration in an effort to address the "land issue" and expand and diversify both the rural and urban economies. It was in these domains that the military's acquired expertise was to gather momentum, leading to the military (military figures) proposing by the early 1970s the first concrete development and integrationist initiatives that were to encompass all the national territory.

One area of technical expansion was in the training and utilization of the Battalion of Engineers of the Military, intended "to support the efforts of the government in the execution of works of national importance" (founded in 1945).[392] In 1962 part of this battalion was moved to the military base in Poptún, El Petén. Until the early 1960s, El Petén had remained a vast lowland jungle region, marginal to the rest of the nation. Early attempts at colonization, under Juan José Arévalo, had proven to be too costly and were subsequently abandoned. In the late 1950s, under the Ydígoras administration, a new effort was mounted to open El Petén to colonization with the creation of the autonomous state agency FYDEP (Empresa Nacional de Fomento y Desarollo de El Petén), an agency that throughout most of the 1960s, 70s and 80s was directed by military figures with civilian technical staff.[393] The military's engineers took up the task of road and bridge building, which took on greater importance under the Peralta dictatorship as a lumber industry was formally established. By 1966, though, there still existed little private land ownership or agricultural activity given the fact that the terrain was rugged and remote from markets, roads, and ports in the south. In 1966, the military engineers of Poptún took up the task of linking El Petén by road to the south (via Izabal): "The work had crucial importance since it would constitute the realization of a dream, the achieving of a grand objective; arrive in the Department of El Petén by way of land, indirectly with this, open the door to the Franja Transversal del Norte by the east side."[394] As the author notes, this project, completed by 1970, opened up the east side of what was later to be known as the Franja Transversal del Norte (FTN). While the potential of El Petén and a conception of the FTN remained limited as of the mid - 1960s, the rapid opening of these areas was to significantly shift the debate on the "land issue" in Guatemala. As the military expanded the road network through these eastern regions, increasing the possibilities for a variety of agricultural, tourist and small enterprise activities, the necessity of "land reform" in the south gradually subsided to be replaced by a more intensive drive towards opening new agricultural regions across the north.

Another dimension of the military that emerged in the early 1960s, and overlapped with the activities of the Battalion of Engineers, was the Civic Action program which could be traced to a newer and "progressive" stream of thought among Latin American militaries. While U.S. training programs had certainly emphasized "civic action" as ancillary to the goal of "internal security" in the Cold War context, the Guatemalan military perceived it as a means to promote development in the rural countryside. Prior to the military offensive of 1967-68, the military had indulged in small - scale projects that brought together military engineers, doctors, dentists, administrators, and technical experts who worked on literacy campaigns, immunization, health care, improving agricultural methods, and installing / improving bridges, roads, and water systems in rural areas. Although most observers have tended to place these "civic action" programs under the rubric of "counter - insurgency / state terrorist" activities, it is more evident in this period that the military was gradually filling a vacuum left by the civilian wing of the state. As different departments of the civilian bureaucracy remained either weak, non - existent, or unresponsive, the placement of military bases across the national territory extended to the military the potential to play a much larger role in rural areas. What fortified the civic action agenda of the military was the overwhelming "success" this program had in rapidly ending guerrilla activity in the Ladino southeast.[395]

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[392] Cnel. e Ing. Edgar L. Ortega R., "Resumen Histórico del Arma de Ingenieros," and "La franja transversal del norte," in Guatemala: Revista Cultural del Ejército. Ano VIII, Vol. 20 - 21, (30 de junio de 1980).

[393] Norman Schwartz, "Colonization of Northern Guatemala: The Petén," Journal of Anthropological Research. Vol. 43, No. 2 (Summer 1987).

[394] Cnel. e Ing. Edgar L. Ortega R., (1980) p. 83 - 84.

A third dimension of the military, and one that has received the most scholarly attention and research, was the enhanced security apparatus that began to emerge under the Peralta dictatorship in response to the guerrilla presence.[396] This included either the formation or expansion of a somewhat obscure collection of "internal security forces," notably the infamous G-2 and S-2 divisions of military intelligence, the judicial police (*judiciales*), the Detective Corp., P.M.A. (mobile military police), and Treasury Police, that acted alone or in concert with local police forces and commissioners as gatherers of information on individuals or groups, "disappearing" those deemed "subversive." What led to considerable scholarly emphasis on this dimension of the military was the rapidity with which these forces surfaced over just a five year period (1963-68), the level of cruelty and terror inflicted on the victims and the larger population (physical mutilation before death followed by the corpses left on streets or roadsides), and the overt connection between U.S. funding - training and increased numbers of political killings (particularly of "non - combatants").

Beginning in the mid to late 1960s, Guatemala, and in particular the capital, were subjected to a cycle of highs and lows in repression related to the activities of the various security forces. The scholarship has periodized the cycles as "waves of terror," the first in 1967-

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[395] See Chapter Four.

[396] See Michael McClintock (1985).

68, the second from 1970-72, and the third beginning in 1978-79. What separates the security dimension of the military from the engineering and civic action dimensions is that by the late 1960s the characteristics of this elaborate security apparatus were to remain largely unchanged. The "developmentalist" and civic action dimensions of the military, however, (which included engineering, planning, administration) were to have an increasing momentum that filled in or overlapped with the activities of the civilian bureaucracy and technocracy. This latter force within the military was to establish elaborate plans and initiate a significant restructuring of different regions of the countryside, an agenda that was endorsed by the military - civilian coalitions of the 1970s. Of course, any initiative with a developmentalist bent was also accompanied by the third military dimension of establishing intelligence and security in expanded regions of military - state activity. Consequently, the expansion of state repression and terror into different regions of the country had less to do with the specific activities of the people in these regions, and more to do with the restructuring dynamics being initiated by different branches of the military in concert with the bureaucracy. This was to become most apparent as the civilian - military coalitions of the 1970s embarked on a major restructuring of the Maya highlands (or FTN), a vast region that had experienced little direct and continuous repression up until the early 1970s compared to the capital or other Ladino regions.

As will be demonstrated, the **problem** with the Guatemalan military by the 1970s was not that it was violently "reactive" or reactionary, but that it was militantly pro - active in its efforts to "develop" Guatemala. The theorization surrounding the "waves of terror," which has suggested that state violence was simply intended to "terrorize" and "demobilize" the general population, is not wholly accurate and tends to be an urban Ladino understanding of the military's repression that neglects a whole series of repressive acts against the Maya population.[397] Military repression then, was to serve several disparate ends related to a broader socio - economic agenda that became established among certain military and civilian sectors by the early 1970s. Whereas the first and second "waves of terror" were clearly associated with the campaign to liquidate the guerrilla forces in the Ladino southeast and then the capital, the third "wave of terror" had quite different qualities and characteristics, due to the expansion and implementation of the military's "development" strategy.

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[397] This understanding is not surprising since the capital was both the intellectual center of the country and the focal point of political organization and activity compared to the rural countryside where the majority of the population resided (specifically Maya). Again, though, this bias led to a vague understanding why the Maya highlands became the focus of such extreme military violence by the late 1970s given the narrowly defined understanding of "military / state violence."

As of the late 1960s the "politics" of the military's role in society was in direct conflict with the thinking of the one nationally subsidized institution of advanced education, the University of San Carlos. Although the national university had not been an overtly "progressive force" with respect to the "Maya question," when it came to the Ladino political sphere it had an activist and radical tradition that dated back to the beginning of this century. In concert with other social forces, but more often than not on its own, it had condemned and engaged in pitched battles against dictatorships and the military's role in politics for decades. The faculties of law, medicine, and education, represented individually or through the Association of University Students, had been the most consistently active force in advocating democratic change within the country. Only university students and professors from this institution could wield enough influence to annually hold a one day parade through the national capital where elected officials, the military and the Church were publicly humiliated and denigrated in effigy and the political scene interrogated through student publications. These faculties had established a long tradition of confrontation with the government (elected or dictatorial), utilizing the university's constitutionally protected "autonomy" as a bastion from which to speak against government corruption and repression. Since 1944, the university had maintained very strong urban middle class roots, and had been the center of professional training from which one proceeded into either the state or private sectors. In this respect, the university and its graduates had commanded considerable respect and influence within progressive Ladino circles. Given the ethnic division and the rural placement of most of the population in this society, the university tended to be a lone voice on a variety on issues. This condition was aggravated as a more radical and revolutionary nationalism was to dominate the thinking of the university during and after the first guerrilla presence in the country.

By the late 1960s a more radicalized university culture came into open conflict with the fact that the economy was expanding under an elected administration and there existed a better trained, somewhat "progressive," military officer class. For the university, the first factor tended to obviate and marginalize the more radical ends proposed by university groups within the political sphere as economic conditions had improved since the late 1950s / early 1960s and the governing Revolutionary Party pledged reforms and increased prosperity. The military factor had also been altered significantly in that the officer class of the military was no longer commanded by ill - trained and self - serving landowners, but was comprised of the same urban and rural middle and lower class individuals as populated the university. The ideological division, but with a greatly reduced technical - intellectual gap, could not have been greater between the two institutions. With the defeat of the guerrilla movement in the Ladino southeast, and the simultaneous rise of a more radicalized university and brash officer class, the stage was set for a violent confrontation within the capital itself.

From Méndez Montenegro to Colonel Osorio Arana

The rule of the Revolutionary Party under President Julio Méndez Montenegro from 1966 to 1970 proved not to be so "revolutionary." Having abandoned both a strong "nationalist" agenda and concerted efforts to alleviate the condition of the rural poor, the Méndez Montenegro administration held to a fiscally conservative agenda, relying on the rapid expansion of the manufacturing sector (geared towards the CACM) and moderately high world prices for agro - exports to generate social improvement. It has been suggested that the PR agenda was "gutted" by the "right - wing" military, but it appears more evident that neither the president / cabinet, nor the PR majority in Congress ever attempted controversial legislation, projects, or financing with the exception of a failed effort to raise taxes.[398] The economic "boom" enjoyed by this administration, fueled by a combination of foreign and domestic investment sources, the advantage of internal CACM financing, and favorable market conditions, began to fade by 1969-70. The CACM was disrupted by the short war (in 1969) and continued hostilities between El Salvador and Honduras, and then by the inherent structural limitations of the CACM itself, notably a limited consumption market for both consumer and capital goods. The PR's extremely modest social and capital investment programs put the opposition on a stronger footing. The 1970 election was be one of the last so - called "legitimate" elections (until 1986), but also most clearly demonstrated the "non - radical" and unorganized character of both the rural and urban population in which continued to operate the small core of revolutionary organizations.

By the late 1960s the PID and the MLN had moved towards a coalition of forces to contest the PR hold on presidential and congressional power. Having enjoyed a certain amount of success in the 1968 municipal elections with this partnership, the PID and the MLN worked on a coalition for the 1970 national elections. While the scholarly tendency has been to assume that these two parties were "right - wing" entities and thus "natural" allies, the fact is that they were political parties with two very different agendas for the country representing different economic interests. I stress this point as it is critical to understanding the economic agenda of the civilian - military coalitions of the 1970s and early 1980s, and the political conflict that was to emerge in which the MLN was at best a subordinate and grudgingly accepted tactical electoral ally of the PID.

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[398] See S. Berger, (1992). Also, René Poitevin observed that the tax reform was defeated due to the antagonism of progressive political sectors, not just the "right - wing" opposition, (1977), p. 196 - 197.

The MLN represented the interests of the older established coffee and cattle producers, and in the aftermath of the guerrilla offensive had organized a strong base of political support in the Ladino southeast as the military "development" initiatives proceeded. While these were sectors of strongest backing, at a general level the MLN represented support for old traditional Catholic values, law and order, and unquestioned respect for a variety of political - religious sources of authority. It also promoted a deep fear of the "Communist threat" (that supposedly infected Guatemala by way of Russia and Cuba). By the late 1960s this message had a broader visceral appeal, particularly in the capital, as the different guerrilla factions embarked on a violent urban campaign of kidnappings, bombings and assassinations that plunged the capital into a chasm of fear and terror given the reaction of the military and various "death squads."

In contrast, the PID was the party of "national development," economic diversification, and rapid industrial modernization, an agenda that envisioned state support for both manufacturing and new agro - export interests at the expense of the coffee industry. Unlike the MLN, the PID favored the creation of a state - financed cooperative movement that would extend to its members the benefits of modern technical and scientific methods in agriculture and other sectors, raising the productivity and export potential of the country. The PID was to also have a penchant for expensive mega - projects and bureaucratic - technocratic solutions to problems of "development," firmly believing that the "guerrilla" or "communist" threat resulted from the "backward" economic conditions of the country, a position that was shared by most officers in the military. The PID was to demonstrate a willingness to "interfere" in the market and finance an array of activities in the economy in an effort to diversify Guatemala's manufacturing and agricultural base.

Consequently, the PID never allowed the party to be led or dominated by the MLN, always refusing MLN - proposed candidates for president (namely Mario Sandoval Alarcón), figures who were most likely viewed as too narrow and parochial to accommodate the PID agenda and its better trained and educated civilian and military supporters. As a compromise candidate, Colonel Arana Osorio represented a figure who straddled these two political constituencies, but to the benefit of the PID. Arana satisfied the law and order concerns of the MLN, being either revered or denigrated as the "Butcher of Zacapa" for his leading role in destroying the guerrilla movement in the southeast by 1968. But he was also an adamant supporter of the military and the PID's "national development" line.

With the legalization of the Christian Democratic Party (DC) shortly after 1966, the Ladino left - center vote was contested by a new party. Given the poor performance of the PR party between 1966 and 1970, and a civilian presidential candidate who proposed no more than a continuation of the prevailing PR mandate, the DC was in a position to propose a more radical platform that would capture the discontent among lower class urban and rural voters. In addition the DC, more than any other party, had attempted to capture support in rural areas by organizing small - scale cooperative initiatives, creating its own rural union membership, and allying itself with the Catholic Action movement endorsed by more progressive clergy. The DC did not stray from this more progressive agenda and put forward Colonel Jorge Lucas Caballeros as its presidential candidate. Colonel Caballeros then led a campaign that included accusing the military and the MLN for the violence, offering benefits for urban workers, and even a land reform program. This was to be the last election in which a major political party or party leader was to advance a major agrarian reform package that threatened the landowning class. Despite this admirable agenda, the DC was unable to overcome the archaic electoral practices in the rural countryside or mollify urban fears about the continued guerrilla and right - wing terror. National elections remained tainted by open vote buying and forced voting practices in the rural countryside, in addition to numerous irregularities with voter registration lists in the capital. Furthermore, the activities of the various guerrilla groups and death squads had fostered a climate in which the terrified lower and middle classes of the capital accepted a more aggressive response to the prevailing political violence.

The 1968 to 1972 period were dark days for the guerrilla movement. Having been decimated in the Ladino southeast and lacking any rural bases of support elsewhere, the M-13 and FAR returned to the capital where they, along with the clandestine PGT, orchestrated a campaign of bombings, kidnappings for ransom and assassinations. The principle targets of this campaign were policemen, U.S. military advisors, foreign ambassadors, wealthy business figures, military personnel and the MLN. The guerrilla organizations remained divided amongst themselves and had cultivated no strong links with either the urban working classes or within the emerging barrios, the strongest support alone coming from the national university which was a visible target for the military and death squads. In 1970 Yon Sosa was killed in a border skirmish with the Mexican military (effectively ending the M-13) and there occurred a much publicized defection of guerrilla militants over the mismanagement of ransom funds. Other than the "revolutionary rhetoric" of the day, the guerrilla movement was internally divided and not engaged in organizing activity. Its strategy was little more than an attempt to terrorize the upper classes and other representatives of "imperialism" irrespective of the consequences for the rest of the urban population.

It was under these conditions that Colonel Osorio Arana and the PID - MLN coalition won the presidential and congressional elections of 1970, the PR coming in second, and the DC a distant third despite its progressive platform. There is no question that Colonel Arana took this election victory as a mandate to use whatever means necessary to eradicate the guerrilla presence in the capital. Shortly after assuming office a state of siege and the second "wave of terror" were instituted, leading to house to house searches and violent attacks against opponents of the regime (particularly in the university). Although this action led to the first serious questioning of Guatemalan democracy from within the U.S., within the ranks of the military it was considered a resounding success. By 1973 the military and the Arana administration could claim that they had eliminated any organized guerrilla presence in the national territory, having captured and "disappeared" half the leadership of the PGT and forced the FAR to reconsider its failed urban strategy. Due to the repressive discourse and actions of the Arana government, which was in marked contrast to the democratic rhetoric of the Méndez Montenegro administration, this period remains characterized as dominated by an extreme right - wing combination of political and economic forces. It has been common, then, to suggest that the regime was dominated by figures from the MLN and that Colonel Arana sided most strongly with this side of the coalition, opposing any reforms or alteration in the status quo. In light of actual economic policies, though, it is apparent that Arana more clearly identified with and supported the "developmentalist" position of the military and the PID. His administration was to initiate a whole series of aggressive economic initiatives that brought the military, and the state generally, directly into expansion and diversification of the economy.

Upon taking office Arana surprised many observers, particularly in the foreign press and on the Guatemalan right - wing, by calling for a "national crusade" in his inaugural address in which the rich had to accept land reform and a redistribution of income, observing that it would be suicide for the nation to continue to postpone social progress for the poor.[399] Clearly Arana did not accept the MLN line that the "communist" presence was transplanted from beyond the borders or that security measures alone could instill social peace. In addition, Arana made a call for reducing Guatemala's dependence on the industrialized nations for the importation of imported goods by expanding internal production, criticizing the "rich" nations for only viewing Guatemala as a supplier of raw materials. Though rhetoric of this nature had been espoused during the election campaign, few on the political right who had supported Arana felt it was necessary to dwell on these issues, let alone put them into practice.

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[399] See New York Times 2 July 1970, New York Times 5 July 1970.

Arana, though, acted quickly in confronting what were deemed the immediate problems constraining the expansion and diversification of the Guatemalan economy. At one level the CACM was slowing its expansion due to inherent limitations, namely the saturation of what had always been a relatively small demand for consumer and capital goods. Secondly, the previous austerity under Méndez Montenegro's administration had left "public capital" (or infrastructural development) lagging behind the expansion of the private sector (specifically manufacturing) and was starting to limit the possibilities for increased industrialization and agricultural diversification. In this respect the slow development of cheaper sources of electricity and the heavy reliance on expensive imported fuel sources were a concern in maintaining a regional competitive advantage, given that El Salvador had already made the switch to hydroelectric power sources. Thirdly, the country was plagued by shortages in the production of basic food staples which barely kept up with the population increase, requiring the importation of expensive foodstuffs that could be easily produced within Guatemala. Arana, unlike his predecessors, set out to rectify these shortcomings through a series of state - initiatives that were to draw support from an eclectic array of social groups.

In dealing with energy policies, Arana bought up Empresa Eléctrica from the U.S. company that controlled it, ending the long history of foreign control and conflict over this important utility. As a consequence, INDE, the state electric company, was then able to proceed unhindered in its expansion of basic electrical services and installation of petroleum fuel generating stations. By the end of 1973, though, as world prices for petroleum prices rapidly escalated, INDE began to revise its electrification plans and proceeded with the Pueblo Viejo hydroelectric dam project on the Chixoy River, bordering central El Quiché and Alta Verapaz, the first major mega - project proposed for northern Guatemala. At the same time a joint study was underway between Guatemala and Mexico to determine the placement of a hydroelectric dam on the Usumacinta River, on the western border of El Petén with Mexico, which would be one of the largest dams in the world.[400] Other projects included the Aguacapa hydroelectric project (in the southern department of Santa Rosa) and geo - thermic electrical production systems proposed for Quetzaltenango and Jutiapa. While the latter sought to address specific demands for increased electrical power in the capital and by the growing manufacturing base in

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[400] Prensa Libre 20 October 1973.

Quetzaltenango, the mega - projects were intended to meet an anticipated demand in both the capital and for increased mining and processing across northern Guatemala.

As of 1971 the Arana regime had finally settled an agreement with EXMIBAL (a consortium of INCO, Canada, and Hanna Mining, U.S.) after close to ten years of ongoing negotiations to exploit the huge nickel and cobalt reserves around Lake Izabal in north - central Izabal. EXMIBAL had initially demanded terms similar to UFCO.'s terms of operation, involving a long exemption from taxes and foreign exchange laws, which had fueled a vicious battle among middle class sectors concerning national benefits from this resource concession. By 1971, and despite pressure from the U.S. government, the Arana regime had limited the length of tax exemptions to five years and required the company to keep a two million dollar balance on deposit in local banks. In comparison to past deals with U.S. corporations, and even with those taking advantage of the CACM, the agreement was a considerable improvement in terms for Guatemala and one the Arana regime felt would generate revenues for the national development plan adopted by the government. As one early observer noted, "[T]he goals of this plan were not backed by the oligarchy and Arana therefore needed a somewhat independent source of financing which would allow him to implement it without touching the interests of the oligarchy, that is without taxing them."[401] With the escalation in world oil prices, the profitability of the EXMIBAL project and other potential mining ventures (copper, diamonds, sulfur) was threatened, increasing the impetus towards hydroelectric projects in the north by 1974 / 1975.

The one unexpected development, though, that was to significantly heighten and create almost unreal economic expectations for the future of the country, was the determination of unspecified quantities of oil and gas in the northwest corner of Alta Verapaz (bordering El Petén and El Quiché). Under Méndez Montengro the U.S. Monsanto Co. reinitiated the search for petroleum in northern Alta Verapaz, and by 1970 Basic Resources Intl. (of Canada and Luxembourg) had entered into a joint venture with Monsanto, spending by then some five million dollars on exploration of a three million acre concession. Towards the end of 1972, two well sites had been established, becoming the first oil - producing wells in all of Central America. Up until 1972 little foreign and domestic interest had surrounded this gradual evolution in the small oil exploration industry, but with the energy crisis in the U.S. (due to the OPEC blockade) in the same year, these finds generated considerable foreign enthusiasm towards Guatemala (since the huge Mexican oil reserves were off limits to foreign exploration). As of early 1973, the ministry of mines and hydrocarbons was overwhelmed with foreign requests for exploration concessions in northern Guatemala. Due to the demand the ministry quickly put into effect a strict new mining code that compelled prospective companies to advance a sizable percentage of their capital investment on deposit in local banks, to split all profits from oil exports 50 - 50 with the state, and to absorb the full costs of exploration (including wells without finds). By the middle of 1973 the ministry was dealing with some 25 to 30 serious offers for exploration rights from some of the largest petroleum conglomerates in the world, with a potential of over fifty million dollars being placed in Guatemalan banks. In addition, Basic Resources was making it clear that while they felt there was a great possibility for vast amount of oil to be discovered, it would be a considerable period of time before this was commercially viable, requiring the building of pipelines and transportation facilities to accommodate this undetermined "oil bonanza." As of the middle of 1974, and one week before Colonel Arana was to hand over the presidency to General Kjell Laugerud, Arana confirmed in a nationwide broadcast that oil had been discovered in "appreciable quantities" worthy of commercial exploration (possibly 4,000 barrels a day from three wells) which he considered to be the greatest achievement to benefit Guatemala's economic development during his term in office.[402] While the extent of the reserves remained undetermined, Arana was emphatic that it was necessary to pursue further exploration and to invest in pipelines and refineries. In only two years, northern Alta Verapaz, El Quiché, and El Petén had become of primary interest to the most powerful corporations in the world and to the central government for the first time, fueling incredible speculation with respect to the future of Guatemala.

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[401] Fred Goff, "EXMIBAL: Take Another Nickel Out, " in NACLA (1974) p. 164.

It would be difficult to describe adequately the enthusiasm expressed by different Ladino middle class sectors over the economic possibilities arising from these oil discoveries. Suffice it to say, though, that for an economy perpetually battered by extreme downturns related to world prices for agricultural commodities, it was seen as a welcome panacea, given the foreign interest and rising world price of crude oil. Not only was Guatemala to be the only oil producing nation in Central America, it was rumored that there was the possibility of becoming the "Kuwait of Latin America." It was also rumored that in central - northern El Quiché the oil was not even deeply hidden, but lay close to the surface in an area where the Maya peoples of Chajul - Cotzal had used the substance to alleviate stomach pains.[403] The odor of petroleum was supposedly readily apparent, requiring the appropriate ministry to immediately investigate. From early on the ministry in charge of this resource continually attempted to dampen speculation and hysteria surrounding the oil discoveries since no determination of the total reserves existed given the very recent opening of the largely Maya - occupied region. Nevertheless, it was evident that the resource discoveries and the potential for even greater finds as exploration continued fostered a vision of imminent transformation of the nation for the better and the overcoming of existing barriers to national development, as captured in an editorial by Antonio Nájera Saravia:

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[402] Prensa Libre 25 June 1974.

[403] Prensa Libre 6 December 1973.

> Now Guatemala must refrain from 'chatter' and seriously put itself to extracting the nickel and petroleum that we have in the extensive northern regions. Both resources are the key to the development of El Petén and all the region of the Verapaces, that moreover are rich in other minerals that await the hand of man in order to help us move forward. When the boats loaded with nickel from Lake Izabal begin to leave and from the pipelines surge the stream of oil, we will see how, almost by magic, will disappear the problems that impede the development of the Verapaces, of El Petén, and even of El Quiché and Huehuetenango.[404]

As may be gleaned from this passage, the Maya highlands from east to west, were for the first time looked upon as the new El Dorado, whose transformation would lift the international status of the country.

These initial oil discoveries served to spark a national debate concerning how best to go about exploiting them, some arguing that the Mexican state example was the best (and the formation of a state industry named PETROGUAT) while others felt that Guatemala's lack of expertise and problems with existing state corporations suggested that foreign corporate investment was the superior means to rapidly develop and commercialize this resource. While the former position was to linger, the latter position held the day in light of the new mining code being introduced, the potential assets for the banking system, and the increased ability of the state to borrow and spend against existing and potential future returns. The infusion of capital, foreign corporate interest, and speculation with respect to Guatemala's overall future eased financial pressures on the Arana regime and allowed the state room to maneuver in other areas of public policy.

Altering the Rural Landscape: State Directed Initiatives In Rural Modernization

One area of government activity under Arana that has not received scholarly attention or systematic analysis were the regime's efforts at agrarian transformation. Primarily this is due to the perception that as an ally of the MLN, the regime was naturally unsympathetic to small producers (Maya and Ladino), opposed to cooperatives and land reform, and simply beholden to the dictates of the agro - export oligarchy. This led to some confusion with respect to the activities and character of the Laugerud administration (1974-78) which was to openly endorse the cooperative movement, and particularly Maya participation, despite the regime being comprised initially of the same coalition of forces as its predecessor. What has been overlooked is the fact that the Arana regime was highly involved in altering the rural landscape through government intervention, which attests to the dominance of the PID's modernizing and technocratic forces over its coalition partners and their defense of oligarchic privilege. As we will see, though, there were no humanitarian concerns, or specific concerns with the condition of the Maya, involved in this transformation under Arana (or later under the Laugerud and Lucas García regimes). Government efforts were geared towards addressing a narrow set economic problems that were restricting the expansion of the economy as a whole. Consequently, the land reforms and cooperative initiatives proceeded within the same racist parameters and assumptions outlined previously. What was changing was the extent to which the Ladino state was penetrating more deeply into communities of the highlands and restructuring existing socio - economic activity in and around the Maya populations. In addition, wholesale restructuring of the Ladino southeast took place, terminating the possibilities of any future guerrilla activity in the area.

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[404] Antonio Saravia, "Hay que extraer ese petroleo," Prensa Libre 23 May 1973.

As mentioned previously, by the late 1960s and early 1970s the inherent limitations of the CACM were becoming apparent. The consumption of both consumer and capital goods was slowing, as expressed in a gradual decrease in the amount of GDP growth.[405] While the manufacturing sector was still showing steady growth via the CACM, the more important agricultural sector (in both domestic and export goods) was beginning to stagnate and the production of basic foodstuffs failed to keep up with population growth. Coffee, cotton and sugar cane production registered only small increases in overall amounts produced due to production techniques and international prices. In order to counter these trends the Arana regime embarked upon an ambitious plan of government intervention into the agricultural sector that included the improving of market systems, greater regulation, financial assistance, technical training, infrastructure and the opening up of new agricultural zones. The administration's main concern was to increase the productivity of existing producers (small, medium and large) and to diversify the agrarian base into new agricultural exports. At an administrative level, early on the regime reorganized the Ministry of Agriculture and established new state organs for economic expansion which included the General Directorate of Agricultural Services or DIGESA (technical training and research, promotional activities); the Agricultural Development Bank or BANDESA (financial assistance); the Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology or ICTA (new crop development and technologies); and the National Institute for Agricultural Commercialization or INDECA (regulate the buying / selling of agricultural produce). This increase in state services for agriculture overlapped with the services for the manufacturing sector through the new National Export Promotion Center or GuatEXPRO, and expansion being supported by the National Financial Corporation or CORFINA (mandated to direct public and private capital into new manufacturing ventures).

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[405] See United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America. Economic Survey of Latin America. 1968 - 1971. See also Susanne Jonas, "Masterminding the Mini - Market," in NACLA, (1974).

This reorganization and expansion of state agencies would have gone unnoticed had it not been for the ideology and intentions adopted by the technocrats that had promulgated this program. The new ideology and intentions placed particular emphasis on the diversion of state resources and technical knowledge towards the small holders (primarily, the Maya) in order to force an overall restructuring upon Guatemala's agricultural sector. This position was openly endorsed by the Minister of Economy, Jorge Lamport, who stated "[W]e're trying to get the Indian to participate in the economy by increasing his activity and giving him a fair price for his products. It's nothing out of this world, just commonsensical."[406] This was clearly a top - down approach, eventually bringing the government into every facet of production:

> ...the idea is to pour money, know - how and talent into the small parcels (at the most one or two acres) that the Indians already have, to teach them how to diversify their crops, to give them all possible technical help and, most important, for the state to buy their new products at assured prices. 'The strategy,' says Gert Rosenthal, the young economist who led 100 Guatemalan specialists in designing the program, 'is to bring agricultural technology to the poor. We can easily triple their wealth.'[407]

Furthermore, the ultimate goals established by the state were not small and uncontroversial, and clearly demonstrated Arana's and the PID's intention to fully subordinate the largest Ladino landholders to the dictates of a modernizing state:

> After the land is improved and the idea is sown, the peasants will be encouraged to branch out into higher - priced crops like coffee, cotton, sugar, flowers, vegetables and cardamom, all crops with a world market. These, too, will be marketed by the government. The plan, to cost $323 million in 1972 and backed by government and private money, U.S. aid and the Inter - American Development Bank, aims in the long run at destroying the system of migration to the coast by making the Indian peasant independent. This, they say, will force greater mechanization on the coastal plantations. Eventually, it will probably also result in

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[406] Georgie Ann Geyer, exclusive to the Los Angeles Times 15 June 1972.

[407] Ibid.

> colonization on unused government land and some expropriation for Indians who want more land.

Such strident talk from the highest echelons of government infuriated the large landowners who had simply counted on the PID - MLN coalition to apply the necessary repression and maintain the existing structure of relations in the rural countryside. For the ultra - right, whose sniping and protests were noticed by many, this agenda smacked of nothing short of socialism.

It was within this larger agenda for modernizing and diversifying the agricultural sector that a state - managed cooperative movement was gradually instituted under the Arana administration. It was established on narrow premises, neither intended nor utilized as a forum for lower class representation, nor a political vehicle for any one political party (although it was to increase support for the existing order and its efforts at an agricultural transformation). Closely directed and monitored from above by the technocracy and the military, the movement was intended solely as a vehicle from which to disseminate the technical "know - how" and distribute the necessary inputs. The cooperative movement was instituted to compensate for the insufficient, or total lack (in the Maya highlands) of state facilities and personnel to direct the agricultural change. Early on under Arana, the bases for the cooperative movement were laid with little fanfare, owing to the intense scrutiny from the political right and from within Arana's own political coalition, but these initiatives were necessary to the rapid expansion later in the regime and particularly under the next administration. By the end of 1972 more than a thousand cooperative leaders from across the country had completed training from an agricultural cooperative training center in Chimaltenango, and by the middle of 1973 the Center for Cooperative Training was inaugurated in Santa Cruz del Quiché (located in southern El Quiché) to train directors and administrators from local communities (notable at the latter event was the presence of Colonel Aníbal Guevara who presided over the ceremony, as commander of El Quiche military zone and representative for the department governor).[408]

It is evident that the Arana regime, and even Arana personally, were determined in bringing about a significant alteration in the way the state related to the mass of small producers in the countryside, and in particular to the Maya of the highlands. But nothing about this change suggested that the Ladino state was coming to terms with the largely Maya character of large areas of rural Guatemala. In fact, as one agronomist expert predicted, cooperative training (at Santa Cruz del Quiché) would bring about not just a major benefit in the social and economic sphere, but also a beneficial cultural change (or elevation).[409] Consequently, the Ladino state ventured into the highlands with a predetermined set of images and economic goals more evidently established to the advantage of Ladinos and the Ladino economy. This was not an effort to deal with structural racism or to preserve and enhance Maya status generally. Despite this being a marked departure in the way the state related to the Maya economically, it never broke new political or cultural ground.

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[408] Prensa Libre 23 August 1973.

[409] Prensa Libre 23 August 1973.

Another major development in rural Guatemala under Arana, and one that further penetrated the Maya highlands, was the opening up of new agricultural areas in conjunction with the road - building activities of the military's engineering battalion. Early on during the Arana regime the expansion of the more expensive settlements in El Petén were curtailed in favor of the recently opened regions of northern El Quiché / Huehuetenango (known as the Ixcán), eastern and northern Alta Verapaz (Sebol and Chinaju), and north - central Izabal. By 1973, tens of thousands of landless families had been moved to (or were drawn towards) these regions from within the highlands or from the Ladino southwest and southeast as the government began to endorse the cultivation of basic foodstuffs (corn, rice, beans) and experiment with coffee and cardamom production for export by a combination of small - holding Maya and Ladinos. In addition, wealthier Ladinos were encouraged to establish cattle production on medium - sized landholdings, beef exports (to the U.S.) becoming one of the fastest growing industries between 1970 and 1974. With the technocratic formulations outlined above, increasing support from international lending agencies, and the seemingly unlimited potential from penetration into a vast virgin territory (which extended from Huehuetenango to Izabal and encompassed El Petén), a new assurance emerged on the possibilities of finally resolving the "land issue" in Guatemala to the satisfaction of all concerned. The large landowners would be compelled to modernize their production without fear of expropriation or an intrusive land reform, and the small and medium landholders could profit from the production of basic foodstuffs and new agro - exports. In addition, everyone's interests were considered sufficiently represented by the greater involvement of numerous state agencies at every level of production and by the fact that the executive branch of government not only supported it, but was extremely active in pursuing the policy objectives. The power of this "modernization" vision cannot be understated, as it reframed the Ladino debate on the land issue away from demands for more radical measures, and brought on side the bulk of the political parties (including most Christian Democrats) and other sectors of society, including the press, academics, unions, agricultural associations, and government bureaucracies.

The region that continued to generate the most concerns about landlessness and rural poverty was the lucrative agro - export zone of the Ladino southwest (not the land shortages / land pressures of the Maya highlands). Large landowners of this zone had begun to diversify their agricultural production and to invest in modern technology and farm equipment. This gradual alteration had led to the incremental expulsion of *mozos colonos* (by not granting their offspring access to lands for subsistence production), increasing the numbers of outright landless and compelling their migration to the capital and other urban centers. The pace of manufacturing expansion in urban centers never kept up to the numbers migrating, and it was from here that the administration felt pressures could be eased by opening up the most northern regions of the Maya highlands, disbursing government - held lands, and ultimately colonizing El Petén. These regions became the escape valve for pressures related to the accelerated modernization and productivity the government wanted to impose on large and medium Ladino landowners, while benefiting from the new production initiated by resettled families in the north. In theory, this alteration would benefit all concerned while ensuring that the revenues from agro - export production continued to flow to the state, enabling it to advance production elsewhere. The problem was not that the regime was unconcerned with problems of landlessness, just that their complete rectification required time.

Nowhere was modernization optimism more apparent than in the Ladino southeast. The counter - insurgency development initiatives undertaken by the military until 1968 had been continued and expanded, first by the government of Méndez Montenegro, and then dramatically under Arana. It was no mystery that Arana had drawn considerable electoral support from the Ladino southeast, and consequently the region was given special attention by the new regime. This included better roads, hospitals, electrification, schools, recreation centers, adult education centers (in health, agriculture, etc.), agricultural agencies, and a much publicized expansion of the irrigation system (through El Progreso and Zacapa). Although the benefits from this transformation were distributed unequally, the region became the quintessential example for what the government imagined would take place in the Maya highlands and the new agricultural zones. The region went from a traditional zone of low productivity and endless emigration, to one of high productivity, mechanization and crop specialization. Within a short period of time the region became integrated into domestic, regional (Central America) and international markets, producing a large proportion of the nation's foodstuffs (rice, tobacco, vegetables, fruit) and exporting across the isthmus and to U.S. markets (beef). In addition, with the Del Monte takeover of UFCO. holdings some banana production was contracted out to local landholders in Izabal. In comparison to the southwest and the highlands, the southeast lacked the large migratory and feudal labor relations that persisted elsewhere and was more technologically advanced and productive despite the poorer quality lands and harsher environment. A new prosperity and security had been created in the southeast by the state, and it was not lost on the

Arana regime that this was reciprocated by local support for the administration and the military generally.

Nevertheless, it was evident such modernization maintained the same racist patterns found on a larger scale elsewhere in the country. Although the southeast held a Ladino majority, there was still a sizable indigenous population in the departments of Jalapa and Chiquimula. What demonstrated the continued racism of the Ladino state within the "modernizing" rhetoric and action was the native massacre that occurred at Sansirisay in May of 1973.[410] The dispute leading up to the massacre was centered around a long, unresolved determination of boundaries between an indigenous municipality of Jalapa and a Ladino municipality in El Progreso. Up until 1973 the indigenous people of Jalapa had cultivated crops within the disputed territory. According to the indigenous population, the Ladinos of El Progreso had prevented them from sowing their crops in the disputed area after a legal decision in favor of the indigenous claim, and this had rallied the indigenous who refused to allow the Ladinos to proceed cattle ranching. The Ladinos, who were unwilling to accept the legal decision and verbal requests from the indigenous communities to comply with the decision, were then confronted with a more organized and violent protest leading to the destruction of the Ladinos' livestock and structures in the disputed area. The Ladinos then requested and received the support of the military's mobile police forces (or PMA), who proceeded to search for the leaders of the indigenous protest and subsequently held them captive after a violent encounter. The indigenous communities responded by attempting to free their leaders, leading to a direct confrontation with the PMA forces (leaving six military police dead and an untold number of indigenous dead and hurt). The event then escalated as over 900 troops and several helicopter gunships proceeded with the hunt for the indigenous leaders and their supporters in the mountains of Jalapa (directed by General Efraín Ríos Montt). In the end, between 20 and 30 indigenous residents lost their lives, many more were injured by gunfire, and six soldiers were dead (four of the six clearly being indigenous), but not one Ladino from El Progreso had suffered anything more than the destruction of some property in the disputed area. Nevertheless the Ladinos felt that the trauma they had experienced and their continuing insecurity required a prolonged and heightened military presence in the area.

This incident is instructive in that it demonstrated that the fundamental structure of Maya - Ladino relations had not been altered. Despite the regime's concern with bringing the native population into the national economy, no mechanisms or means of communication, or representation of Maya legal and political claims had emerged, and their frustrations were met with overwhelming military force where Ladinos were involved. Simply the rumor or sight of organized and protesting indigenous communities had prompted a violent response from the state rather than any effort by other state agencies to resolve the dispute. Ladinos generally were assured that they continued to have the upper hand by virtue of a responsive and repressive state, and that the property rights of Ladinos remained intrinsically more valuable than any number of native lives. The way in which the military dealt with this affair was never questioned, which expressed a generally held sentiment in Ladino circles that the situation had been addressed correctly and that whatever wrongs had been committed clearly lay with the indigenous population in the region (after all, they had been organized and armed with machetes). While platitudes were expressed about the unresolved land issue in Guatemala generally, no effort was made to determine if the indigenous claims to the region had been legally confirmed prior to the violent confrontation that ensued. The event further attested to the fact that Maya - Ladino relations continued to be violently antagonistic and extremely unequal, foreshadowing an important limitation to the "modernizing" rhetoric and actions of the Ladino state. This antagonism was exacerbated by the fact that the strongest political force for rural restructuring came from within the ranks of the military.

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[410] Prensa Libre 28 May 1973. Prensa Libre 29 May 1973.

The Guatemalan Military As a Force For Transformation

As of 1973-74, the Guatemalan military was fomenting change in the rural countryside, with an impressive list of achievements under the Arana regime, particularly in regions where state services were either minimal or non - existent. Leading the list was the military's Civic Action Division, its motto being "Security and Progress," and comprised of a corps of engineers, doctors, educators and administrators.[411] It was active in constructing school facilities and even supplying books to combat illiteracy. The military also ran a network of education facilities, "Adolfo V. Hall Institutes," which provided the necessary secondary education to proceed into university or the Escuela Politécnica. The military was also active in rural healthcare, directing their own medical teams in providing vaccinations, dental care (including distributing toothbrushes and tooth paste), minor surgical procedures and offering courses in health care. Untreatable cases of illness were transported by the military to hospitals in the capital. It was in its engineering feats, though, that the military took the most pride. At one level it was active in constructing a series of road networks to bring the goods from isolated communities into the national economy. At another level it was responsible for the success of several major projects which included the construction of a major pipeline to bring water to the capital from the southeast (Xaya - Pixcaya), the highway that integrated the "vast and rich department of El Petén" with the rest of the nation, the construction of more than sixty water wells (benefiting some 350,000 rural people), and its continuing collaboration with the state agency FYDEP in the larger development of El Petén.

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[411] "Suplemento Especial dedicado al Ejército Nacional," Prensa Libre 6 July 1974.

By this time, though, the military's role was not restricted to these generally accepted functions of a "developmentalist" state, but had increased to include the military having an important financial stake in the success of these larger development initiatives and the economic expansion and diversification generally, due to the establishment of the Bank of the Military. The Bank's operating capital was drawn from the public purse and the military's own pension fund and within its first years of operation was both the recipient of deposits for oil exploration and a lender in agricultural and manufacturing ventures.[412] The military itself referred to this financial institution as a bank with a "social projection in the service of Guatemala," suggesting that it was to have a more aggressive and riskier lending policy that would rival the renowned conservatism and short - term lending practices of its rivals in the banking industry.[413] Consequently, the military had acquired in a short period of time a significant interest in the fortunes of the new agro - exports and resource industries of the north, as well as a financial stake in the success or failure of the broader economic expansion being promoted by the Arana administration. The military's investment fund was also utilized for a variety of other commercial and recreational activities which included the construction of a commercial office building (to house a branch of the Bank of the Military), the planned construction of a second commercial high-rise, the buying of land in the capital for officer housing, the completion of a controversial pharmacy (as it directly undercut other pharmacies), and the finishing of two "Clubs for Officials" (which were elaborate hotel and sports facilities for military officials and their guests).

Institutionally and intellectually the military was preparing for the larger agenda it was elaborating for the country. This included construction of a new training facility for the Escuela Politécnica, moving it from the capital to a rural center northwest of Guatemala City (in San Juan Sacatepéquez), the creation of a Center of Military Studies to follow and evaluate advances in military training and equipment in other countries, and the development of the elite "Kaibiles" or the military's special forces at the military base in Poptún. In addition, it had established a permanent training center for the Mobile Military Police, considered the "principle link between the people and the military" given that it had gradually acquired functions that overlapped with the national police, the Treasury Police, and the ministry of migration and customs.[414] The PMA's mandate included the maintenance of public order in rural and urban areas, crime prevention, pursuing contraband, auxiliary aid in emergencies, drug interdiction, and even collaborating with sanitation brigades in rural areas. This enhanced security force was given a special mandate to control crime in the rural areas, again making up for deficiencies in other state ministries, and included the contracting out of PMA services to private business i.e. banks, as a private security service.

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[412] Ibid. See also Susan Berger (1992), p. 169.

[413] Prensa Libre 6 July 1974.

The military, then, had grafted itself upon and centralized a host of functions traditionally managed by disparate civilian ministries, even placing itself financially within the economic expansion promoted by the state. From this overview we get a sense of how the military's presence in Guatemalan society became ubiquitous in a relatively brief period of time, merging into a formidable alliance with several civilian sectors through important economic and social development agencies of the state. The modernization rhetoric was accompanied by a noticeable dynamic in every department of the state, and the military was unilaterally asserting its authority in more socio - economic spheres and across larger expanses of the national territory.

Although the administration and the military could claim some notable successes during Arana's tenure, with fairly high levels of economic growth between 1972 and 1974 and the emergence of a new image for Guatemala abroad (from one of violence and turmoil to one of stability and development), the regime also enjoyed the benefits of a resurgence in world prices for the country's main exports (coffee, cotton, beef). The extent to which the country was still subject to the vagaries of the international economic order were revealed with the dramatic increase in world oil prices in 1974. This led to a marked increase in consumer inflation, government expenses, and costs of production, leading to discussions of increasing agro - export taxes and petroleum / electrical rates.[415] Inflationary pressures also fostered protests and strikes among the transport sector and teachers, and in response to the tax proposals there was an immediate backlash from the private sector (agro - export agriculture and industry) who demanded that the government retire its larger agenda for state directed development and institute a new fiscal austerity and conservatism to offset these unexpected expenses.[416]

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[414] Prensa Libre 25 May 1974.

[415] United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America. Economic Survey of Latin America 1974. 1976. Susan Berger (1992), p. 164.

An acrimonious debate took place just prior to Arana handing over the presidency to a new administration, and Arana's resignation speech expressed the divisions that were surfacing between the existing civilian - military coalition and important economic sectors of the economy.[417] Arana made the point that repression was not enough to combat "subversion" and ensure peace and order, and that a program of economic development and social progress was indispensable or the rest of society would suffer the frustrations of those whose "unique patrimony" was misery and sickness due to a lack of adequate land, technical aid, and credit. Arana observed that the political violence of the extreme left had been defeated and that the social factors that contributed to their "stimulation" had been diminished due to a reduction in poverty and helplessness. "Unfortunately," noted Arana emphatically, "the high objectives for economic development and social progress that my government asserted did not encounter the support it required on the part of the major economic powers from the private sector. Too many of them believe they live in small centers that once made happy the feudal masters of the 12th century, while they are surrounded by shortages, frustrations, and resentment from their subjects."[418] Arana articulated a latent sentiment that was held by most military officers and the technocratic elite, a growing scorn and contempt for the most powerful economic sectors who it was felt continued to be unable to comprehend their own best long - term interests. This division during Arana's regime signaled what was to be an ongoing conflict between certain private sector interests (notably from the coffee oligarchy) and a more entrenched military presence in the state intent on instituting a broader socio - economic agenda.

Conclusion

The Arana regime had introduced a stronger and broader development dynamic into the functions of the state and heightened the role of the military in fulfilling this agenda, either alone or in concert with several other ministries. With this coalition of forces, comprised of the military's officer class and an educated civilian elite, the "middle class" development agenda was more firmly established, but at the expense of collapsing all distinctions between military and civilian spheres of activity within the state. This coalition of forces had also placed itself in an awkward position vis - a - vis other political and economic forces in society. On the one hand it had opened a breach with respect to the largest landowning interests, and then with the industrial and manufacturing sector as the effects of increased world oil prices began to be felt within the domestic economy. Additionally, there was the growing perception among the middle and lower classes in the capital, who had experienced the brunt of the military repression in the early years of the regime, that the Arana administration had been both too restrictive politically and had not dealt sufficiently with the emerging economic problems. On the other hand, the coalition had garnered support in several rural areas due to its ongoing and highly publicized intentions to significantly improve the production and marketing of agricultural goods, expand state services, and channel aid to small producers (including the Maya highlands). This combination of antagonisms and increased state activity created the perception of a heightened state (and military) autonomy. But this autonomy was based on the eventual, rather than the existing, success of several important yet speculative enterprises which included the nascent oil field exploration, mining endeavors, public infrastructure, hydroelectric projects, and agricultural expansion and diversification. As a consequence, the PID had abandoned those reactionary sectors that had helped in bringing the coalition to power, but had developed only questionable support among those sectors beginning to benefit from the "modernization" agenda. Such was the political conjuncture at the time of the 1974 elections, elections that were to be marred by claims of an electoral fraud perpetuated by the official coalition (PID - MLN).

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[416] Private sector ads in Prensa Libre 30 May, 1 June 1974.
[417] Prensa Libre 2 July 1974.
[418] Ibid., p. 6

Given the above configuration of Ladino economic and political forces, and the dominance of an aggressive and visionary, but insecure faction, it becomes more evident why the future of the Maya highlands and El Petén were to figure so prominently within the agenda of the Ladino state after 1974. These regions represented not only a potentially untapped source of national wealth, but as much an alternative base of Ladino power in displacing the strength of the landowning oligarchy (primarily in coffee). This more overt political and economic power struggle within the Ladino sphere, though, was taking place without a concomitant alteration in the way Ladinos (and the Ladino state) viewed and acted in relation to the Maya majority. As documented, "modernization" or "state directed development" carried as harsh an indictment of the Maya majority as previous caricatures that had been espoused by the coffee oligarchs to justify the initial native subordination. While the latter envisioned the Maya as simple "pack animals," the former image (via the state) could envision the wholesale transformation of the highlands and the Maya way of life, something the earlier ideology could not even fathom. What made the modernization ideology and agenda more deceptive was the fact that it was wrapped in preconceptions and a discourse which asserted benefits for the whole "nation." Consequently, as of 1974 it was still unimaginable for a Ladino political party to consider organizing on the basis of real Maya representation and addressing their treatment within Guatemalan society. Hence this ethnic division continued to limit any possibility for a truly representative and popular political entity emerging. Rather, Ladino political activity remained centered around various middle class demands (rural and urban) and the military. Thus it was no surprise that in the campaign leading up to the 1974 election, the massacre of natives at Sansirisay was neither commented or reflected upon by the press or political participants.

The Maya collectively were in no position to influence political debate or the political agenda, let alone intercede against the increasing and extensive designs on the highlands being formulated by the Ladino state. The vast majority remained locked into an array of socio - economic conditions that either prevented any type of cross - ethnic political interaction or activity, or were consumed by daily survival through a range of activities, e.g. petty commodity production, seasonal wage labor, small landholding subsistence. It was on behalf of this latter Maya sector that the Arana regime had established a novel state initiative in an effort to increase agricultural production generally, and to force some degree of modernization and innovation on other agricultural sectors. As I will argue, however, these ends were never intended to alleviate the condition of the Maya as a whole, but were focused on larger state goals that encompassed all the national territory. The latent fears, contempt, and suspicions underlying Ladino perceptions of the Maya were not altered by a narrow agenda that only sought to increase economic productivity generally without any concern for specific communities or how the Maya were treated generally. Even though the agenda for economic change in Guatemala was quite radical in its implications, it in no way was accompanied by a cultural - political acceptance of the Maya majority.

Chapter Six

The Military and the Maya (Part II): The Central Argument Regarding the Massacre

From 1980 to 1983 the Guatemalan military undertook an unprecedented assault on the Maya highlands that led to the slaughter of some 50,000 Maya peoples, the internal displacement of up to another 1,000,000 and the forced emigration of between 100,000 and 200,000 Maya (primarily to Mexico). This chapter examines the confluence of events that led to the Guatemalan state killing, displacing, and exiling hundreds of thousands of Maya. Although this "episode" in Guatemalan history has generated several contradictory and inconclusive theories concerning the military's motivations for launching such a devastating and ruthless attack (to be discussed shortly), what differentiates this analysis from existing explanations is that the theories to date suggest that "something occurred" within the Maya collective provoking a violent reaction by the Guatemalan military and regime. What will be argued in this chapter is that this focus on the Maya, represented as either part of a larger "popular class" or singularly as a "cultural entity," is insufficient for determining the root dimensions of this assault, and that a deeper account of why it occurred lies in an examination of those socio-economic sectors that comprise the Ladino dominated state. The evidence, I believe, points to a calculated and planned assault on the Maya highlands that arose from a particular configuration of Ladino political forces under certain economic conditions. The attack, then, was part of a substantially larger Ladino state offensive to restructure and fully "integrate" the northern highlands into the prevailing political economy. The implementation of this agenda will be shown to have continued undisrupted by either the presence of the guerrilla movement or by varied internal political activity generally, and was only derailed by a combination of externally imposed "economic crises." This prompted an extreme "bourgeois" or "elite" conflict that was partially attenuated by the military dictatorship from 1982-85. It is my contention that this explanation better accounts for both the period under discussion and the politics of the post-1985 period of "civilian rule", and offers a more damning indictment of the military's behavior and the way the Ladino state relates to the Maya majority (up to the present).

A considerable amount of the intellectual confusion that surrounds this period is due, I believe, to a combination of misunderstandings with respect to the character, actions and thinking of the "dominant faction" of the Ladino state, particularly the military, and of the political character of the rural population. The Guatemalan economic elite (and specifically the coffee oligarchy) have always been characterized as extremely reactionary, self-absorbed and undemocratic, which is patently true and incontestable. Where the confusion emerges is in the extrapolation that the state (political parties, military, technocracy, public administration, courts) were disposed to the service of this elite and the landowning oligarchy in particular. Rather, as has been documented, several new agricultural, industrial, commercial and financial interests had arisen, with political party expressions and military - technocratic alliances, since 1954, with inherently diverse and contrasting demands on the state which were in conflict with the narrow agenda of the oligarchs. The Arana regime had laid the bases for a more extensive, state - directed transformation that further distanced a specific military - civilian coalition (of military officers, technocrats, public administration, select rural and urban middles class sectors) from the sectoral interests of different economic groups by constructing and acting upon a larger vision of national economic development. This vision placed a speculative emphasis on the Maya highlands and the ideal of "national reconciliation" through its economic expansion and diversification. This state - directed transformation was to be accelerated and deepened under the Kjell Laugerud and Lucas García regimes, fostering a separation between the military - civilian coalition that prevailed in the state and the various economic groups that comprised the "private sector." As we will see, this divergence, and not the conflict in the Maya highlands, ultimately led to the emergence of a true military dictatorship in 1982 as a response to this condition.

The second misunderstanding concerning this period is with respect to the "political" character of the population in the rural countryside, which continued (until the mid - 1980s) to be seen as an unlimited source of support for the guerrilla movement due to the extremely skewed distribution of land and resulting poverty. This, though, was a "political image" that stood in sharp contrast to the anthropological evidence of the day. There is no question that the rural socio-economic environment was permeated by an array of violent production relationships that stemmed from the agro-export plantation structure (patrones, mozos colonos, Maya seasonal labor). It was also evident that the land scarcity fostered inter- and intra-community conflicts and divisions that belie the simple image of a "poor mass," sharing similar conditions and experiences, being fervently organized into a unified and "revolutionary" expression. As we have seen, the rural countryside of Guatemala held a multifarious set of regional socio - economic and ethnic structures undergoing divergent forms of change. The Ladino southeast had become a bastion of regime and military support due to state intervention, and the Ladino southwest was to remain a "dead zone" for revolutionary activity. Both regions throughout the 1970s were largely tranquil in terms of conflict over land ownership in comparison to the Maya highlands and the new agricultural zones developed within the highlands. This quiescence in the Ladino southeast and southwest was due in part to the expanding manufacturing sector in different centers, the emerging cooperative movement, the movement of some landless peasants to the north and as beneficiaries of the ongoing distribution of state held lands, the increased availability of public capital to foster agricultural diversification and expansion, more extensive state infrastructure, and stronger resulting rural markets.

The Maya peoples as a collective straddled a variety of these productive activities ranging from petty commodity producers, small manufacturers, subsistence to surplus agricultural producers, seasonal laborers, professionals, labor contractors, transporters, vendors, to wholesalers and retailers of various sizes and success. Consequently the Maya peoples were not a unified collective with respect to economic conditions and experiences, and lacked any forum to represent indigenous interests. Their "political identity" rested almost totally within the negative perceptions and actions of the Ladino state and various Ladino economic sectors. This was at a time when they were becoming increasingly engaged by the state, a state that remained racist, discriminating and suspicious of the Maya. The Ladino state's interest in the Maya population resided not in the condition of the Maya people per se, but in the geographical region as a "place" with the potential to alleviate larger existing and perceived Ladino economic problems. Although the Ladino state had asserted symbolic gestures of "concern" towards the Maya, i.e. participation in cooperative movement, these never addressed the fundamental problem of the economic and political disparities and latent or overt racism towards the Maya. Furthermore, these "Maya concerns" were to remain subordinate to the more important Ladino priorities of securely developing or capitalizing the known and unknown resources in the highlands i.e. oil, hydroelectric power, minerals. These concerns were followed by agro-export goods i.e. beef, cardamom, coffee, vegetables; and then domestic foodstuff production i.e. corn, beans, rice. By 1974 the military - civilian coalition in power envisioned all these activities expanding in harmony, provided they were adequately funded and administered through the state (and military). In reality, though, it was an inherently unstable and conflictual hierarchy of economic values and priorities imbued with ethnic distinctions, based on the value of the economic activities to the national or Ladino economy. Thus, a large proportion of the Maya population was to experience the repression of a racist state attempting to transform the Maya existence to serve the ends of a Ladino vision of "development" and a "developed nation". Like the old oligarchic image of the Maya, this vision, despite its rhetorical sophistication, could not imagine the Maya as active participants in determining the future of the highlands since they were never intended to be the direct beneficiaries of such a transformation. This was the configuration of ethnic and political - economic priorities by the early 1970s that was to lead to a horrendous destruction of Maya communities across the northern highlands. This was expressed most clearly in the fact that what Maya responses there were to this state intrusion were to be met with levels of repression out of all proportion to actions against the Ladino population. Most importantly, this will explain why those populations that were the most marginal to the national economy underwent the most intense repression by the early 1980s.

What existing observers will find contentious about this analysis is that it tends to undermine explanations premised on the traditional "class - dependency" perspective, which have suggested that by the late 1970's the Guatemalan state was confronted by a series of political "crises."[419] These "crises", it is argued, were fostered by the reemergence of popular class protest against the existing "oligarchic - military" rule and resurgence of a broadly supported guerrilla movement. This put the "reactionary" coalition of forces on the defensive, increasing the levels of state violence across the country. As this conflict continued, it prompted first an "economic crisis", then a political crisis, "crises" which were only resolved in 1982 by a military dictatorship that resorted to an indiscriminate level of terror to preserve the existing political and socio - economic order. The underlying sentiment in this analysis, which draws heavily on the sequence of events in the neighboring countries of El Salvador and Nicaragua, is that the "popular classes - revolutionary movement" came very close to defeating the military and overthrowing the existing illegitimate, repressive and exploitive social order of oligarchic rule.

My analysis is clearly at odds with several important points put forward in this conceptualization of the period under examination, the most general one being the analogies drawn between the Guatemalan experience and the cases of Nicaragua and El Salvador. As will be demonstrated, the Guatemalan experience leading up to the massacres in the highlands was quite different from the revolutionary contexts of El Salvador and Nicaragua, since there is no evidence that either "popular class" or guerrilla activity in Guatemala ever affected the performance of the economy or the functioning of the Ladino political order. Even though the loss of lives in Guatemala was comparable to the other two revolutionary contexts, it will be shown that the guerrilla - military conflict in Guatemala had a "localized character," more easily controlled by the military, that never threatened the established Ladino political and economic order. This is not to deny that Guatemala underwent both an economic crisis and a political crisis; rather, both of these conditions were precipitated by factors that had no relationship to the conflict in the highlands. The "economic crisis" will be shown to have been imposed from beyond, not within, the borders of Guatemala, related directly to the conflicts in El Salvador and Nicaragua, and the collapse of the CACM, followed closely by the concomitant drop in world prices for a variety of agro-exports and a steep increase in the price of oil and U.S. interest rates. The "intra-bourgeois" or political crisis resulted from a growing private sector backlash against the measures adopted by the existing administration to deal with these externally imposed "crises", not from concerns about the military's "handling" of the guerrilla movement and the Maya population. This "crisis" within the highest echelons of Ladino society promoted the rule of a military dictatorship, from 1982 - 85, in an effort to resolve the obvious divisions fostered by the past civilian - military coalition with different factions of the "private sector." This event was neither a response to a growing "threat" from the guerrilla movement or the "popular classes", and explains why there was no disruption in the execution of an established set of plans by the military in "dealing" with the Maya population of the highlands. Thus, my problem with this perspective is not that it simply dismisses or understates the significance of the Maya - Ladino division in Guatemala society, but rather that the evidence does not clearly support and confirm the version of events put forward by this position. A stronger explanation of events can be affirmed with direct reference to the ethnic and regional characteristics of Guatemala over this time period. Furthermore, the evidence does not substantiate the thesis of an imminent guerrilla victory in this period or the creation of a "revolutionary context", but more clearly delineates the ethnic and economic motivations behind the military's attack on the Maya people irrespective of the "guerrilla presence" in the highlands.

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[419] See the works of Susanne Jonas (1991), Michael McClintock (1985), Susan Berger (1992), George Black et. al. (1984), Arturo Arias, "Changing Indian Identity: Guatemala's Violent Transition to Modernity," in C. Smith, ed. (1990), Nelson Amaro (1992).

Certainly the novelty of my approach does not lie in asserting that the Maya peoples were subjected to a vicious and unwarranted attack, as there already exist a few variations on this theme advanced from within the field of anthropology. As discussed in the first chapter, Carol Smith released one of the first major challenges to the interpretation of events proposed by the class - dependency perspective by arguing that there was a military attack on the Maya highlands in reaction to a "labor-shortage" being experienced by Ladino producers in the agro-export and industrial sectors.[420] Smith's thesis was based on an observable strengthening of petty commodity production and market systems among the Maya in various regions of the highlands, which decreased their reliance on subsistence production and seasonal labor. What Smith was challenging, with respect to the class-dependency perspective, was the assumption that the Maya en masse were enduring a combination of an acute land shortage and increased immiseration that would lead them to support a revolutionary agenda. Based on her research, in tandem with that of other anthropologists in Guatemala, Smith could not accept this assumption given that she had found that in those regions of the highlands where the land shortage was the most acute (and individual land possessions smallest), the Maya communities were relatively more prosperous compared to those regions where land pressures were not as great (and land possessions larger). What accounted for this apparent paradox was that in those communities which had been subject to earlier land pressures, the Maya had been compelled to rely more heavily on petty commodity production and markets and higher value cash crops to survive. With the expansion of state infrastructure in the highlands and more extensive markets, many Maya communities had extracted themselves almost completely from the seasonal wage labor and subsistence production system. In contrast, in the more northern and / or remote regions of the highlands where land possessions were larger but infrastructure and marketing systems weaker, these communities were still subject to the yearly routine of subsistence and surplus production in staples, and seasonal wage labor. Drawing on the evidence and her continuing research experiences in the highlands, Smith found no compelling reason for the Maya to support a revolutionary movement and thus provoke a military response. Rather, by virtue of their socio - economic condition, Smith inferred that a general strengthening and expansion of the highland production and marketing system had imposed a "crisis" upon the Ladino oligarchs and business class, prompting the military attack in order to "release" Maya labor from the highlands. What Smith was arguing, and continues to contend, is that by the mid- to late 1970s the Maya generally were not experiencing a "crisis" or the conditions that would push them towards supporting a revolutionary movement in the manner suggested by the class - dependency perspective.

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[420] See Carol Smith, "Labor and International Capital in the Making of a Peripheral Formation," in C. Berquist, ed., Labor in the Capitalist World Economy. (London: Sage Publications 1984) p. 149, "Local History in Global Context: Social and Economic Transitions in Western Guatemala," Comparative Studies in Society and History. 26 (April, 1984) 193 - 228, and "Beyond Dependency Theory, National and Regional Patterns of Underdevelopment In Guatemala," American Ethnologist. 5 (1978).

Smith's evidence is compelling because it is based on actual research and observations over many years among the Maya prior to the massacres initiated by 1980. She has also attempted to elaborate a more intricate and systematic understanding of how the highland economy has "developed" over time due to state infrastructure and the initiative and skills of the Maya peoples themselves. Her larger thesis, though, pertaining to Ladino state motivations for initiating such a vicious attack on the highlands, has serious limitations as it relies on the same reductionist and static conception of an entrenched oligarchic - military presiding over the nation. As documented in the last chapter, the military - civilian coalition in power intended, for several reasons, to strengthen the economic position of the Maya vis - a - vis the Ladino landowning oligarchs. In addition, by the late 1970s, the Ladino state had other mechanisms to "release" Maya labor from the highlands, notably by terminating its role in the cooperative movement and ending subsidies on agricultural inputs, i.e. fuel, fertilizers, pesticides.

Furthermore, among the numerous complaints the "private sector" had against the existing political economy of the civilian - military coalition, a "labor shortage" was not one of the concerns expressed over this time period. In fact, by the late 1970s a structural "labor surplus" was becoming more apparent as the private sector had to contend with the collapse of CACM and depressed world prices for important agro - export goods, i.e. coffee and cotton. Consequently, the specific economic conditions and particular state - oligarchic alliance Smith's thesis requires did not prevail either prior to, or during, the military's assault on the highlands. Hence, while Smith's observations pertaining to the socio - economic conditions of the Maya during this time period must be taken seriously, her larger thesis concerning the state - military's motives suffers from several inaccuracies with respect to the character of the Ladino state and the economy.

A more nuanced position which affirms the unwarranted "attack" thesis has arisen from several other anthropological sources.[421] This position shifts the blame for the attack onto the presence of the Ladino - led guerrilla movement in the highlands. Essentially, this position holds that the Maya were generally innocent victims caught within an ongoing conflict between two armies. At its most extreme, there are charges of outright manipulation and intimidation of the Maya communities by the guerrilla movement, and references to the complete inability of the guerrilla forces to protect and defend those communities that the movement had implicated either directly or indirectly in its confrontation with the military.[422] This perspective, then, has begun to interrogate the revolutionary ideals of the guerrilla movement by criticizing the failed tactics and strategies employed, suggesting that the Maya population was simply utilized as an instrument of warfare without any real concern for the fate of the people themselves. A continuing criticism of the guerrilla movement has been its perseverance in the Maya highlands after having been noticeably defeated by 1982-83, suggesting that the guerrillas remain responsible for a considerable loss of life after this date which could have been minimized had they simply "moved on" after realizing their non - existent potential for success from within the Maya population.[423] This position has become an increasingly influential and powerful explanation of what occurred in this time period due to a series of post - 1983 political events that extended opportunities for renewed anthropological work among the Maya after the climax of highland massacres by the military.

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[421] See Phillip Wearne, The Maya of Guatemala. Report No. 62. (London: The Minority Rights Group, 1989), Robert Carmack, ed. (1988), Pierre van den Berghe (1990), David Stoll (1993), Ricardo Falla (1994), Victor Perera (1993). With these authors there are varying positions on the extent to which the Maya supported the guerrillas, but there is a general sense that the majority of Maya "support" for the guerrillas arose only after the military had significantly escalated the terror in the highlands.

[422] Examples of this are the occupation of Maya communities by the different guerrilla groups, spreading of propaganda, movements in and around Maya communites.

[423] David Stoll (1993). Phillip Wearne (1989).

With the gradual return to "civilian" rule in 1985-86, the United Nations' role in administering a percentage of the exiled Maya population in Mexico, and a larger role by international observers in monitoring the Maya highlands, a greater access to "survivors" took place. Undoubtedly, the real strength of the evidence accumulated so far from this period are the gut - wrenching accounts of cruel killing rituals, physical mutilations, violent rapes, and massive property destruction inflicted upon one Maya community after another in which some 440 were totally razed without sparing the elderly, women or children. Invariably, these testimonies attest to the Maya experiencing a sudden and unexplained attack by the military to which most can offer no reason or pretext, with the exception of the odd reference to guerrilla forces being known to operate in the surrounding area prior to the repression. As in Carol Smith's account, there is no indication that those Maya communities that were to suffer the brunt of this attack were in any way predisposed or became involved in political activities that could be deemed "contentious" or "subversive". Rather, the repression "just began," and many of those communities that were the least political and the most remote and marginal (and thus defenseless) became the targets of the worst military abuses. It is no wonder, then, that this position, whose emphasis begins first with the Maya experience, should condemn not only the military but the activities of the guerrilla movement too. The limitations of this third explanation are precisely its strengths. While there are considerable insights to be gained from the testimonies and voices of those Maya peoples who survived this period, the easy proposition that the guerrilla movement brought this upon the Maya fails to explain a number of aspects. Within a broader examination of the highlands, it can not explain why the repression and destruction was so severe in the remote northern regions of the country versus the west - central highlands where guerrilla activity was as prominent, nor does it account for a large number of military killings and massacres that occurred outside of those regions of known guerrilla activity. What has limited these studies are the "area specific" character of the works, which do not take under consideration comparisons across highland regions. Although we have a clearer understanding of the Maya position at the time the violence was initiated, and a better sense of what they experienced under these repressive conditions, we are left without an analysis of the Ladino state and society in relation to the Maya, and of what motivated the extreme repressive measures at the time they occurred.

The powerful testimonies of the Maya themselves and the work of anthropologists have contributed significantly to contesting the class - dependency position on the question of a "general Maya support" for the revolutionary agenda. What all these positions share, though, is a common assumption that "something occurred" within the Maya collective which prompted the violent reaction from the state, whether it was their gravitation towards a revolutionary agenda due to socio - economic conditions, or an economic resurgence that threatened the Ladino economic elite, or the guerrilla movement taking up activity within the highlands. The problem is that all of these positions contain an element of truth. Certainly there is evidence that a small percentage of Maya, specifically younger and better educated Maya, became active combatants within the ranks of the guerrilla movement even before the extreme repression fostered a more questionable basis of support for the movement. Although no "labor shortage" arose to the extent that Smith hypothesizes, it is true that several powerful Ladino sectors were uncomfortable with seeing a generalized Maya affluence and violently opposed any government or external facilitation of such an outcome. And there is no doubt that tens of thousands of innocent Maya families and communities, or noncombatants, lost their lives and the material bases of their existence in a military assault of extreme proportions. This has established a somewhat irreconcilable set of positions with respect to the Ladino state's motivations for undertaking such violent action against a large proportion of the Maya population since there is little agreement on the character of the Maya population prior to and during this military action. Part of the problem, I submit, is that the intensity and dimensions of this vicious attack on the Maya highlands are difficult to comprehend in light of the highly vulnerable, marginalized, and rudimentary character of the population that was to suffer such "overkill." One only has to see the people that comprised these thoroughly defenseless communities to find it hard to imagine how these remote constituents could ever have posed any type of "political threat" to either the Ladino order to the south, or to a ruthlessly trained and technologically equipped military already accomplished in fighting guerrilla warfare. If, as I contend, and which the anthropological evidence seems to support, that there was no "revolutionary context," then this only adds to the confusion and further aggravates the problem of not having a satisfactory framework with which to analyze a documented atrocity, one that continues to defy a thorough explanation of why it happened to the degree that it did. In other words, the military action was out of all proportion to any conceivable "threat" that arose in the highlands, and to this fact we lack, as observers, adequate explanation for what the Maya have endured. Neither the existing references to the long - standing Ladino - Maya division nor to "counter-insurgency" tactics sufficiently fills this vacuum, as the first suggests a certain inevitability to this event (which there wasn't) and the second tends to obscure the ethnic division, affirming that the Maya were existing or potential insurgents (which is unlikely). What is required, I believe, to surmount this impasse, is to shift the question from "what may or may not have occurred within the Maya collective," to what occurred within the state, and in this case, a Ladino state that expressed the continuing political and economic domination of Ladinos over Maya.

The originality of this position is that it broadens the focus of the investigation and places the Maya within a larger political, social and economic context which, I believe, can more fully account for the various positions outlined previously. In the previous chapter the emergence of a heightened interest on the Maya highlands had occurred among particular sectors of the Ladino state that on the one hand opened up new fissures within the Ladino state and the private sector, and on the other hand redefined the way in which the Ladino state viewed the largely Maya - occupied northern highlands. Within the latter arena this entailed going from a vision of a ruggedly impenetrable terrain occupied by a "primitive" and almost hopelessly "backward" population to one in which the Ladino state felt confident in its ability to transform this terrain and its population, and reap the benefits and solutions believed to accompany such a process. Certainly I am not the first observer to comment upon the discovery and extraction of oil from northern Guatemala, but other observers have not been able to link this activity (which took place in northern Alta Verapaz) with the broader military violence against the Maya, which occurred later across the northern highlands and into El Petén. What is still unclear is how important this was to the Ladino state and whether or not it even was a factor in the military assault across the highlands. The problem, as I see it, has to do with referring only to where actual successful production (in this case oil) did take place, and excluding an account of the considerable amount of speculative activity that accompanied this time period. What this chapter will document is the substantial planning, initiatives and financial stakes that accompanied this "new vision" of the highlands noted above, a vision that went well beyond the concern for just the proven oil reserves in a narrow stretch of land in northern Alta Verapaz. It will be shown to have included plans to radically alter the landscape in the areas of agriculture, mineral and water resources, introducing state infrastructure and industrial development of considerable magnitude. What may be observed today, and accounts for the almost total lack of commentary and debate on this aspect of the Ladino state, is the fact that almost none of these plans and initiatives were ever concretely realized or came to fruition. Nevertheless, I argue, they comprise the most damning evidence against the Ladino state in determining its motivations that led to such a wholesale slaughter of the Maya, particularly the remote Maya populations of the northern highlands. The rapid and aggressive manner in which these plans were elaborated and put into action, in an effort to quickly "capitalize" and "develop" the north for immediate returns, will reveal the complete disdain the Ladino sectors generally, and the powerful sectors in particular, still held towards the Maya communities subjected to this state - directed, capitalist expansion. In other words, the Maya did not have to react to any great degree, or in most cases at all, to be considered an obstacle or "threat" to the successful fulfillment of this series of state initiatives. This perception arose within the context of an aggressive Ladino state effort to transform the national territory and is significant in accounting for the breadth of the military assault, and cannot be separated from the combined effects of the externally imposed economic crises upon the nation after 1978. These latter events, and not the conflict in the highlands, will be shown to have had a serious impact on the political economy, fostering the severe divisions that led to a military dictatorship, but no reprieve for the fate of the Maya peoples.

What this chapter will reveal, I believe, are the more sinister and depraved qualities of the relationship between the Maya and the Ladinos, and the Ladino state in particular, that manifested themselves in this time period. The Maya population was confronted by a particular configuration of hostile Ladino political forces and economic circumstances which they were unable to alter. Most importantly, it demonstrates that the Maya always had a "political identity" within Guatemala, but not one that was created out of their own collective presence and action. It was a wholly negative identity created and acted upon by the Ladino state. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Ladino perception of the Maya into the 1970s, was still imbued with negative, derogatory, suspicious and "subversive" images, anxiously anticipating some action that would change the Maya and thus the nation. This left the Maya vulnerable to more coercive attempts at transformation. It was also observed in the last chapter that the Arana regime had undertaken what appeared to be steps towards a reconciliation with the Maya peoples, by including them within a larger economic strategy of cooperatives, technical support and financial aid. Still, it was evident that underlying this state support was a vision of an accompanying social and cultural change on the part of the Maya participants in this project of development and integration, and the massacre late in the tenure of Arana demonstrated that no real advances had been made in the political treatment of the Maya. The Kjell Laugerud regime (1974 - 78) was to accelerate and deepen this development and integration agenda, which at first created the image of a dramatic alteration in Ladino - Maya relations to the benefit of the Maya. What became apparent, though, was that the vision of a more coerced restructuring and continued Maya subservience remained paramount as the aggressive state plan involved greater quantities of public and private capital and potentially larger financial returns. By 1978-79, then, the Maya were not only considered a persistent cultural problem for the nation, but had become a more politically suspect entity within the context of a rapidly expanding and diversifying Ladino economy that increasingly engaged and affected the Maya of the highlands. Although the guerrilla presence served to heighten this Ladino state perception of the Maya peoples, it will be shown that this impression would have emerged whether or not the guerrillas had appeared in the highlands, as it flowed almost naturally from the existing character of Maya - Ladino relations. Consequently, as the Ladino state agenda gathered momentum over this time period, the Maya became subjected to more overt forms of state and private repression simply by virtue of being Maya, not because they were in any way radicalized, active protagonists against the Ladino state, or an innocent party caught between two armed entities. Ladino perceptions of the Maya were to allow no room for "innocence." Once this Ladino state perception of the Maya as increasingly "subversive" had been established by the early 1980s, despite any evidence to confirm it, the Maya collectivity became subjected to an intense state repression that was aggravated by the economic crises imposed from beyond the borders. The established character of Maya - Ladino relations in Guatemala always held this violent potential. What brought about this violent outcome, as we will see, was a series of political and economic events wholly unrelated to the Maya in which their mere presence was seen as an impediment to the fulfillment of a particular Ladino state vision of national development.

The Kjell Laugerud Regime: The Ladino State Vision Entrenched

The Kjell Laugerud regime (1974 to 1978) represented not just a continuation of the state initiatives under Arana, but a significant deepening, acceleration and expansion of the Ladino state within the economy. Confronted by higher petroleum prices, higher costs for a range of imported capital inputs, and escalating consumer inflation, the Ladino state reacted by increasing its regulation of the economy and outlining a series of development plans in the areas of electrical power production, mineral / oil exploration, agriculture and industry. Due to the somewhat symbolic emphasis on Maya participation in the strategy for diversifying and increasing the levels of production in agriculture, it has been suggested that there was a "populist" element to this agenda. As we will see, though, the Ladino state maintained a very traditional position with respect to the Maya population, denying them any real input into the design and implementation of the agricultural strategy. And politically, in fact, the Ladino state was to remain as exclusionist and unresponsive to a whole series of ethnic related issues fostering a disintegration in Maya - Ladino relations to the extent that the Maya were to end this period in a more precarious stance versus the state and certain Ladino economic sectors. This disintegration occurred as the military and the various state agencies played a major role in directing and restructuring the economy. As the prevailing Maya - Ladino relations precluded any possibility of a substantive populist alliance, and the monetary stakes behind the more important Ladino ventures increased, the stage was set for a more violent confrontation. The outcome could have been quite different except for the fact that the Maya highlands were to become so critical to the creation of a new material existence for Ladinos generally, and that the military was in the forefront of forging and realizing this vision of national development.

The deepening and rapid implementation of this modernization agenda, which was largely elaborated within a civilian - military coalition comprised of the military's officer corps, the PID, the PR and the civilian technocratic agencies involved, fostered a major political party realignment that was carried out within the first year of the Kjell Laugerud regime. While the MLN had initially been in agreement with the PID in the early years of the Arana regime, its party membership and congressional representatives had become uncomfortable with the PID's economic agenda for restructuring given the complaints from its core constituency, the oligarchic landowning class. The MLN, in the run up to the 1974 election, was becoming divided over what its political role should be for the future, given its subordination in the coalition of the CAO and PID.[424] Through the coalition the MLN enjoyed access to the corridors of power, yet the dominant wing of this coalition was not sympathetic to the demands of the MLN's constituency. In the pre - candidate selection phase it was clear that the relationship between the PID and the MLN was strained and only reconciled by noted MLN leader, Salvador Alarcón, being selected as vice - presidential candidate to the PID - CAO's (and Arana's) choice of General Kjell Laugerud as presidential candidate. Despite this formal reconciliation for electoral purposes, the MLN and the PID were to part ways shortly after the election in an openly hostile and antagonistic manner. The significance of this strained relationship, though, was overshadowed by the political controversy surrounding the 1974 election itself and charges of a massive electoral fraud having been perpetrated by the coalition behind General Kjell Laugerud against the victory of the presidential candidate of the Christian Democrats (DC). The 1974 elections and aftermath expressed the increased interaction of military figures and civilian Ladino forces behind a development agenda which began to draw approval from a variety of sectors, dividing political parties and blurring ideological lines. Although most observers have agreed that the official ruling coalition (CAO - PID - MLN) severely undermined the overall legitimacy of the electoral process by fraudulently manipulating the vote count in favor of its presidential candidate, this was a more complex realignment process that took place over a two year period from 1973-75. As the legitimacy of the electoral process was decreased due to the behavior of all the political parties, a degree of legitimacy was restored as a result of certain election results, political compromises and the resulting expulsion of the MLN from the official coalition. Nevertheless, it was evident throughout this process that the majority of the population remained largely apolitical or unpoliticized in character.

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[424] On this dispute see Susan Berger (1992), p. 174. Also Latin American Weekly Reports from 1974.

In 1973, as the official coalition consolidated its position behind General Kjell Laugerud (former defense minister under Arana), as their presidential candidate, the DC and the PR parties considered an alliance to oppose the official coalition. The PR, though, was badly divided between those sectors who favored the policies of the official coalition and a left tendency that was interested in supporting the DC opposition. In the end the DC and the PR could not agree on a candidate, and when the PR executive endorsed retired Colonel Ernesto Paíz, as their candidate, the party split its support and the left tendency gravitated towards the DC candidate. The PR, for the second election in a row, was not to be a serious contender. The Christian Democrats, aligned with two smaller but unofficial parties, made a dramatic bid for presidential power by basically abandoning all it had stood for in the last election. The executive unilaterally dropped its reformist plank (which had included land reform), marginalized the more radical members of its party, and forced its leading pre - candidate, the respected civilian René de León Schlotter, to step down in favor of a military candidate only some five months before the election. Clearly these actions signaled the DC desire to capture support from within the military, wealthier progressive sectors, and urban middle class sectors (or already contested sectors), rather than expand its popular base in the rural countryside. The choice of General Ríos Montt to lead this coalition was no less contentious within the party itself, as some DC members were hesitant about endorsing a military figure whose only notoriety stemmed from his prominent role in the indigenous massacre in Jalapa by the military only one year before (a legal action was taken by the native residents against the general).[425] In addition, this unilateral decision by the executive displeased the party faithful who were accustomed to a more democratic selection process and role in deciding campaign issues, (and this no doubt affected their response after the election). Nevertheless, with General Ríos Montt as presidential candidate for a more progressive coalition of forces, the official coalition was confronted by a fairly powerful array of forces in the last stretch of the election.

In comparison to the previous two elections there was little contrast in political platforms and more emphasis on the character qualities of the individual candidates and the pace of existing socio - economic change, not its content. No individual effort was made by any party to broaden the platform to address the rural poverty of the Maya majority, with the DC, as the politically left entity, only promising to accelerate the pace of the existing development agenda and increasing opportunities for education, something all parties rhetorically supported. The fact that the election was between three military figures, and that neither General Kjell Laugerud or General Ríos Montt considered this to be an ideological competition, only added to an electoral malaise. Even with the aggressive campaigning by Ríos Montt, newspaper editorials couldn't help but observe the apathy among the electorate of the capital, a center renowned for its political activity. What made this election interesting from early on was the much - publicized DC belief that the official coalition was committed to *continuismo* and would rig the election results to win no matter what the outcome. Consequently, the DC coalition fueled suspicions of an electoral fraud in the works several months in advance of the vote, a suspicion that was only aggravated when President Arana made a public address to the nation in favor of the official coalition and state development initiatives in place. Given this political climate, charges of an electoral fraud were inevitable and all that remained was the position of the military after the results were announced.

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[425] Account taken from Prensa Libre and Latin American Weekly Reports (LAWR).

On the day after the election the first results from the electorate in the capital were published, giving the DC coalition and Ríos Montt a decisive lead. Then all announcements ended for three days with General Kjell Laugerud being declared the victor upon the resumption of election publicity. Like past elections, this one had included the same election irregularities and political violence that rendered any vote somewhat suspect. What was contentious was the fact that all the opposition questioned the legitimacy of the results, the DC coalition charging outright fraud and the PR convinced that there were enough inconsistencies to warrant a new round of voting. The official coalition and its supporters were also in a position to question and attack the DC coalition for its pre - election day declarations of an imminent fraud combined with "victory bravado," claiming at one point to have captured over 50% of the vote. When the presidential vote by department was released it revealed what most would have assumed was a plausible outcome. The DC coalition had received twice as many votes in the capital as the official coalition, while the latter dominated in several rural departments. What remained unclear was whether or not tens of thousands of ballots for Ríos Montt had been destroyed, but with the known voter apathy prior to the election, it was impossible to determine how many people had actually voted. With the electoral commission vouching for the outcome, the PR then accepting the election results, and the military hierarchy silent, the DC coalition was unable to force even a ballot recount for its military candidate. The whole affair was sufficiently clouded by varying interpretations and inconsistencies concerning what had taken place to leave the DC coalition with the simple claim that they had played the "official game" and still were denied access to the highest political office.[426]

The election aftermath was not without its intrigue and concerns about political unrest and military revolt but this was due mainly to the passionate attitudes of the contenders, and the fact that the election results had placed two high - ranking and recently active military figures in a standoff against each other, not because the larger population had become active or involved. It was rumored that Ríos Montt interceded personally to prevent a revolt among junior officers in the Escuela Politécnica, where he had previously been in charge, and that the officer hierarchy itself was divided over respecting the official results or intervening on behalf of the opposition. While the student wing of the DC coalition called for armed protest, Ríos Montt prevailed in calling for a peaceful but protracted resistance to the election results. With the exception of its youth wing, though, the DC coalition found little overt support for the street demonstrations and strikes it needed to force a change of the election results. No business strikes occurred, urban labor unions refrained from participation, and the countryside and rural centers were silent. Ten days after the election, General Ríos Montt was reactivated within the military, accepting a foreign posting. In his final public appearance the General pointed out what had become obvious. The call for peaceful resistance had completely failed because the population, lacking popular organizations, had not come out in support of the DC coalition. It was apparent that even those tens of thousands of DC voters in the capital were not willing to back their votes with active support. Such was the nature of the constituency the DC had appealed to in revamping its campaign strategy.

The fraudulent election results were not without their impact, though, since the capital and several rural regions had supported the DC coalition in a call for rapid progress on existing reforms, a solution to current economic problems, and a reduction in the repressive activity of the state. In addition, the DC had significantly increased its number of seats in the Congress, giving the party a greater role to play on various committees. At a general level, the PID (and to a lesser extent, the CAO) and General Kjell Laugerud were in full agreement with these positions, which is more than can be said with respect to the MLN. Consequently, within a brief period of time the DC found itself not only supporting the initiatives of the president and the PID, but part of an alliance between the PID and the PR, against the MLN. Between the election in March of 1974, and the swearing in of General Kjell Laugerud in July, the DC was largely an obstructionist force in Congress in a effort to keep the electoral fraud issue alive. Upon taking office, though, President Kjell Laugerud and his cabinet proceeded with an array of progressive social and economic initiatives which the DC could neither ignore nor contest.

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[426] See the book written by prominent DC figure, Danilo Barillas, Democracia cristiana y su posición ante el ejercito de Guatemala Hoy. (Guatemala, 1974).

Over the course of 1974, the Kjell Laugerud administration moved rapidly, and largely without debate, in addressing the growing problems within the economy, most related to the impact of external factors. After only a month in office the government identified three principal problems.[427] One was the shortage of basic consumer goods due to cultivable lands not being utilized, contraband activity, exportation of such goods and speculative activities. The second was increased inflation, partly caused by unscrupulous intermediaries, while salaries and wages remained static. The third problem was the industrialized nations, which had "unilaterally augmented" the prices of primary and secondary materials, agricultural and industrial inputs, machinery, chemicals, fuels, and fertilizers, and elevated the interest rates on credit. Although the government recognized it could do little to affect the third problem, it was more than willing to intervene deeply in the economy, via its "Plan of Immediate Action," to a degree that was to startle the private sector. The salaries and wages of all state employees were raised with a notification that the private sector was to shortly announce wage increases in all sectors. The government was also going to establish a minimum wage and salary scale. A "special impulse" was given to increasing the production of corn and beans through rapidly granted low interest rate credit provided by state agencies, and the government was to buy fertilizer abroad and sell it to small producers well below the commercial price (and to be distributed by the Ministry of Agriculture with assistance from the Civic Action division of the military). A long list of basic goods were banned from export and the military mobilized to combat the contraband trade. Existing shortages in corn, beans and rice were to be rectified by importing from abroad and selling at cost through government agencies. Government price - setting on petroleum prices was maintained with a lowering of the price for certain fuels, those used in transport and for food preparation. In addition, price controls were established for a broad range of consumer goods, with a special office set up for the reporting of unscrupulous commercial outlets selling above set prices and subject to fines and / or imprisonment. The price controls affected everything from eggs, milk, sugar, corn, beans, coffee, meats, and cooking oil to agricultural - industrial inputs and construction materials. What had been a largely unregulated market in the buying, selling and movement of goods across borders was now heavily regulated by the government, with a particular emphasis on reducing and eliminating a range of speculative activities by wholesalers that had accompanied and added to inflationary problems and periodic shortages of some goods, particularly in the capital. To the extent that such measures garnered wide public support, they further aggravated the breech between the private sector and the state left in place under Arana.

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[427] See Prensa Libre 19 August, 23 August 1974.

The Government Sponsored Cooperative Movement

A second "popular coup" for the Kjell Laugerud administration was its open and overwhelming endorsement and expansion of the cooperative movement early in the regime's tenure. At the first national conference of cooperativists (some 1000 participants) in December 1974, the cooperative movement put forward two main recommendations: one being the creation of agricultural security by reducing risks, and the second being the colonization of the Franja Transversal del Norte (and in particular the Ixcán) to the benefit of small farmers. President Kjell Laugerud surprised many observers by not only presiding over the closing of the event, but by hosting a much - publicized lunch for all the participants at the national palace, the "first time in history" that the campesinos (notably indigenous) ate side by side with the president in the salon of the national palace (traditionally reserved for ambassadors and government officials). The president's economic advisors projected that with these recommendations from the coop movement, the "food problem" could be resolved within two years. This highly symbolic gesture was followed up in January of 1975 by the president proposing to "institutionalize" the national cooperative movement in an announcement at the inauguration of a modern agricultural cooperative facility in Chimaltenango. He further affirmed his belief in the cooperativists adding that he was convinced it was the only form by which to improve agriculture and economy of the country. At the end of January the president personally handed over to various cooperative organizations over 1.1 million quetzales in government loans. As of April 1975, and after only seven months, the government was able to claim to have funded the formation of over 70 cooperatives ranging from various sectors of agriculture, to artisans, credit / loan and consumer coops. At the end of a year in power, it was estimated that there were over 500 cooperatives, with some 150,000 members benefiting a larger population of about 700,000 people. With these diverse initiatives the Kjell Laugerud regime had regained and expanded the momentum of Arana's regime which had been lost during the election process and controversies.

Given this momentum and series of gestures towards the Maya, it was hard to imagine that by the end of Laugerud's terms, the Maya were to be considered a suspicious populace by the state. The degeneration, though, was not necessarily in conflict with the cooperative agenda since the latter had a very narrow set of objectives in which the "plight of the Maya" was only a "spin-off" effect, not a priority. The interest of the Arana regime, and later the Kjell Laugerud regime, in a "cooperative movement" had to do specifically with the high costs involved in importing basic foodstuffs that could easily be produced domestically, and the emerging shortages and inflation in the capital which engendered economic and political discontent. In directing state resources towards a highly regulated and monitored movement made up of small producers, the intention was to increase both the producing and consuming power of a larger percentage of the population, resolving the bigger problems confronting the Ladino state and capital. Since the Maya made up a significant percentage of small producers, their participation was necessary to fulfilling this larger Ladino agenda.

The Ladino state, then, was really only interested in results based on an overall increase in production levels, not in the specific problems or needs confronted by individual Maya families or communities. This gave the cooperative movement, from its inception, a "hit and miss" character, whereby some communities and regions were to enjoy the benefits of the government's intervention and support while many others were to remain marginalized, if not ignorant, of this movement and its economic advantage. Hence, as long as there were noticeable increases in the production of domestic and exportable goods from the highlands, the Ladino state would be satisfied with the results by various state agencies and the cooperative movement whether or not the profits associated with this production increase benefited only a few or the vast majority. The extension of the cooperative movement fell between these two extremes and thus recorded observable successes in some communities and regions or specific agricultural activities i.e. cardamom. Furthermore, although Maya participation was seen as necessary to the raising of agricultural productivity generally, the cooperative movement had a high Ladino rate of participation in both urban and rural areas, as coops could be formed to address any number of issues from community credit and loans, consumer groups to small industry and services.[428] The state - directed cooperative movement, then, did not embrace the Maya collective on their own terms or to their specific benefit, but was simply a means for the state to increase the productivity of a certain percentage of the Maya population to the advantage of the national economy generally. In no way did this government initiative single out the Maya as a whole for special treatment, nor did it ever signal an attempt by the Ladino state to rectify the long - standing divisions between Maya and Ladino since the cooperative movement was never allowed, nor attempted on its own, to be a political forum to achieve such ends.

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[428] For instance, under Arana, barbers were encouraged to form cooperative so that they could import equipment without being subject to certain taxes.

It is important to draw out the specific character of the cooperative movement as some confusion has persisted over the political significance of this movement in light of it being targeted by the military in the early 1980s as a "subversive entity." What will become apparent is that the cooperative movement was not attacked because cooperatives per se had become identified as subversive, but because in the highlands alone they were the most visible forms of organized Maya activity in an environment in which all Maya were under suspicion by the Ladino state. In other words, it was the Maya participation in the cooperatives of the highlands that made the coops subversive, not the fact that the Maya were cooperativists. Over this period the coop movement never did anything remotely political to warrant being deemed subversive and had for the most part remained formed, financed and directed by the Ladino state. As we will see, this image of a subversive Maya population emerged out of an unrelated context, separate from a cooperative movement comprised of both Ladinos and Maya and dominated by the Ladino state itself.

Strains In the Political Elites

Despite the narrow ends of the cooperative movement, the immediate and dramatic initiatives of the Kjell Laugerud regime over a brief period of time rendered the previous electoral scandal a moot point for the DC since the regime had proceeded with an agenda far more radical in character than the DC had proposed or campaigned on. It was also an agenda that was drawing support from many sectors of society, a level of popular support that the DC was not going to be seen as against by continually challenging the administration and its policies. Within the first year of the regime, both the PR and DC found themselves in support of the Kjell Laugerud administration, and in a formal alliance with the PID and CAO by the end of the year. Due to these initiatives the MLN became a fractured entity as internal discord emerged over whether or not the party should endorse the economic agenda of this administration. Early disunity was expressed publicly when several MLN congressmen joined the CAO and rumors surfaced with respect to a dissident wing of the MLN wanting to form a new party that would support the administration's efforts. Clearly the bulk of the MLN party was at odds with the policies of the Kjell Laugerud regime and the PID, and this was manifested in a hostile dispute over the selection of president of the Congress, a position the MLN wanted in order to direct debate and obstruct legislation. When the PID refused to back an MLN candidate for congressional president and advanced their own party leader, Donaldo Alvarez Ruíz, the MLN responded with personal intimidation and death threats against the PID leader.[429] This public spectacle and open hostility between the PID and the MLN led to the MLN being expelled from the coalition, the PR and DC closing ranks with the PID, and the latter three sharing powerful committee positions. The MLN was largely marginalized from any official political role and by July of 1975 had been reduced to an opposition role.

Given the MLN's narrow base of party support and historic need to enter into coalitions to attain political power, and not being particularly popular in the capital, this should have signaled its demise except for the fact that the party was to garner support from an increasing number of rural and urban business interests concerned with the heightened degree of state control, regulation and intervention in the economy. The MLN was no longer just a party of the oligarchs espousing a violent "anti - communism"; it was to become the defender of "free - market" capitalism to the extent that it was willing to openly vilify the Kjell Laugerud regime as being "communist" and of practicing "Peruanismo."[430] Emboldened by an independent political line that had the backing of a larger percentage of the private sector, the MLN renewed its para - military or "death squad" activities of the late 1960s in an effort to intimidate labor and cooperativists. The Kjell Laugerud administration had not only opened up a political fissure among various elite sectors, but a violent one at that, which pitted powerful and hostile sectors against the policies of the state. The Kjell Laugerud regime did not buckle in the face of such attacks and pressed forward with an array of reformist initiatives that were to further exacerbate these divisions.

Between 1976 and the election in 1978, the various branches of the private sector had accumulated a considerable list of grievances against the Kjell Laugerud administration. Of these, the most vocal and persistent complaints came from the industrial and commercial sectors, as they attacked the regime for its spending practices and intervention in the economy, notably over price controls. With the devastating earthquake in March of 1976, in which some 30,000 people were killed in and around the capital, the Kjell Laugerud administration had extended its control over the economy. This included increasing the number of goods affected by price controls i.e. construction materials, and compelling the wealthier sectors of society to invest in long - term government bonds to finance the reconstruction. When the regime not only extended the controls but proceeded to publicly fine and sentence to jail terms those wholesalers and retailers who violated the laws, the commercial and industrial sectors became inflamed. In private sector ads the government was accused of fostering scarcities by restricting incentives to produce and distribute goods, and comparisons were made between the Kjell Laugerud measures and the "socialist agenda" of Chile's Salvador Allende administration. As government measures continued in effect these sectors stepped up their attacks on the regime, augmenting criticism of government corruption, uncontrolled spending, and fears about the growing public debt, arguing that the regime was responsible for the country's economic problems, not the private sector and the "free market." Other complaints surrounded the efforts by the regime to increase the freight load of the national marine fleet by forcing exporters to ship a higher percentage of their product with the state - protected transportation fleet over competitors. This move even brought vocal criticism from the United States. By 1978, then, the various factions of the private sector had a wide variety of complaints against the existing civilian - military coalition, the regime clearly not addressing their major concerns. At this point, though, the commercial and industrial sectors lacked substantive support from the all - important agricultural sectors, a condition that was to change by the early 1980s.

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[429] LAWR 20 June and 27 June 1975. Prensa Libre 21 May, 7 June, 14 June, 16 June 1975.

[430] A reference to the radically socialist measures introduced by the Peruvian military after the 1968 military coup, measures that continued until 1975. Prensa Libre 8 July 1975.

During the pre - 1978 elections and towards the end of Kjell Laugerud's administration, there were, then, severe divisions between certain elements of the private sector and the state related to the regime's measures to regulate, rationalize and intervene in the production and distribution process. What made the run up to the 1978 election less acrimonious than it could have been was the fact that both the world prices for important agricultural exports were high and the manufacturing and construction sectors were doing well. A buoyant economy helped to suppress the deeper divisions between the private sector and the existing civilian - military coalition, divisions that were to be quickly revealed as the economy was struck by a series of externally - imposed economic crises. Only indirectly did the guerrilla presence in the Maya highlands ever have a bearing on this high - level dispute, and only to the extent that the civilian - military coalition counted on the expansion and transformation of the northern highlands as a basis for its larger development strategy. This specific civilian - military coalition concern, though, was to alter the way in which the guerrillas, and by default the Maya, were to be dealt with by the Ladino state. As we will see, the very nature of the capital involved in this state - directed development strategy demanded that the northern highlands and El Petén be "secured" and transformed in a wholly different manner than had previously occurred in regions that underwent simply an agricultural transformation.

Guerrillas In the Midst: The Ladino State Addresses Signs of Resistance

"Who could have known that the military would respond with such brutality?"

Rolando Morán[431]

The above statement, made in 1990 by one of the principle figures behind the formation and leadership of the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), succinctly captures not just the extent to which the guerrilla movement was wholly unprepared for the level of the military assault on the highlands, but, additionally, the extent to which the guerrilla movement was unable to comprehend the underlying motives for such a horrendous military assault. This is not surprising since it was not the thinking or tactics of the guerrilla movement that changed during the 1970s, but the socio - economic priorities of the civilian - military coalition in power. The EGP, as the best organized and equipped faction of a larger guerrilla movement, and operating within central El Quiché and Huehuetenango, experienced an assault disproportionate to its potential threat to the Ladino state and economy. The reasons for both the military barbarity and its intensity over a short period time resides in the confluence of two important factors, one that had remained static in character and a second that emerged as an immediate priority for a particular Ladino faction in power. These were, namely, ethnicity and economic development. These two factors, from the perspective of the guerrilla movement, were either misunderstood, underestimated, or went unacknowledged as they proceeded in the early to mid - 1970s to establish a base of activities within the Maya highlands.

The movement of the EGP guerrilla focos into northern Guatemala from Mexico in 1972-73 was neither unnoticed nor particularly eventful at the time, and up until the middle of 1975, and despite the military being aware of their presence in the highlands, fostered no great concern on behalf of the Ladino state. From 1972 to 1975 there were occasional skirmishes and confrontations in different parts of the highlands between the military and various upstart armed movements, organized and relocated in light of the repression in the capital. Nothing about these different events had spurred the military to significantly escalate their presence and repression in the highlands. What was different about the EGP movement into the highlands was that it was proceeded by a tactical examination of the highlands as part of a long - term strategy for an eventual rural - urban offensive against the repressive structures of the state. For two important reasons the highlands were seen by the guerrilla movement as an advantageous zone in which to initiate a long - term action. One reason was the remote and rugged nature of the terrain where the military and the state generally had a weak presence. The north - central regions of Huehuetenango and El Quiché are comprised of mountainous and heavily wooded terrain that give way to lowland and dense jungle in the north, towards the border with Mexico. Although the population density is lower than in the south - central highlands, there is a sizable Maya population in small communities across the mountainous landscape, and a growing population through the relocation of Maya and Ladinos into the lowland jungle areas, generally referred to as the Ixcán. The second reason was the backward character or level of socio - economic development in the highlands relative to other regions of the country, a condition which would be a basis for rallying support to a revolutionary cause.[432]

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[431] From Joel Simon and Beatriz Manz, "Representation, Organization, and Human Rights Among Guatemalan Refugees in Mexico 1980 - 1992, Harvard Human Rights Journal. 5 (Spring, 1992) p. 101.

Clearly the guerrillas sought, at a tactical and numerical level, the incorporation of the Maya population of the highlands into the revolutionary struggle, but there is little evidence to suggest that they had fully explored the political ramifications of the enduring Ladino - Maya separation in society. While the continuing Ladino discrimination towards the Maya was seen as an advantageous factor in organizing the Maya population behind the revolutionary cause, the guerrillas did not seem to recognize that the type of racism practiced in Guatemala implied that the Ladino state response would be significantly different than in the past due to the "subjects" involved. From the very outset, then, the possibility for community massacres and unimaginable military - inflicted horrors was always a real danger depending on the degree of success the guerrillas were to enjoy in the highlands. What was to expedite this outcome well in advance of the guerrillas enjoying any level of revolutionary support in the highlands, though, was another factor that went unrecognized by the guerrilla movement, namely the high priority the Ladino state had placed on the development of the highlands. This second factor was to dramatically alter the traditional or known rules of engagement and confrontation due to the fact that the monetary stakes and potential returns were so high for the region while the indigenous population became a tertiary concern and at worst, was considered a major impediment. The type of investment needed in this development agenda was risky enough under ideal conditions, or in other words, under a national tradition of political and socio - economic stability. The added concerns to the Ladino state of having to foster, secure and perpetuate the extended image of a secure investment climate, in a vast area inhabited by an already suspect population through which armed revolutionaries moved freely, brought the Guatemalan military into the forefront of the development agenda.

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[432] See interviews in Marta Harnecker, Pueblos En Armas. (Mexico: Universidad Autonoma De Guerrero, 1983).

Investment Priorities For the North

There were a few important differences between the forms of risk capital that began to enter Guatemala together during the 1974-75 period, and were directed towards the northern highlands. The one form was risk assumed by the Ladino state itself, via loans from the Inter - American Development Bank and the World Bank, to proceed with the planning and implementation of a whole network of hydroelectric projects. The increase in world oil prices in 1973-74 had forced a reevaluation of the existing hydroelectric plans, and placed a premium on the elaboration and construction of several large, and very expensive, hydroelectric dams as a way to reduce the country's reliance on imported fuels. Preliminary studies had shown that several major river systems in the highlands held the volumes and flow rates of water to more than satisfy the existing and forecasted electrical energy demands of the nation. As of 1974 the external financing had been secured and the initial phase of construction underway for the huge Pueblo Viejo hydroelectric project located on the Rio Chixoy o Negro, situated on the border between central El Quiché and Alta Verapaz (the main tributary being the border between these two departments). In itself, this one hydroelectric facility was the largest endeavor the government had undertaken in the northern highlands and held major importance in satisfying the existing electrical needs and those of the near future. Overall costs of the project were estimated at a couple of hundred million dollars, (and ballooning throughout the 1970s and early 1980s to reach a final bill of some 1.2 billion dollars). Thus, Pueblo Viejo was built at a huge expense to the state but with only minimal utility, if any, to the surrounding Maya population or the northern highlands generally. Furthermore, it was only one major dam in a series of planned hydroelectric facilities for the north. In the south, the María Linda - Aguacapa hydroelectric project was under construction, but neither this site nor planned projects for the south compared in size to the Pueblo Viejo and other proposed dams for the north. By 1975 the state electric company had formulated a master plan of electrification based on the hydroelectric potential of all major water systems.[433] For the northern highlands alone, the plan called for three major hydroelectric facilities to be built between 1975 and 1990: Pueblo Viejo; Xalalá, on the northern border between El Quiché and Alta Verapaz; and Chulac in Alta Verapaz; with a number of other proposed northern sites for expansion between 1990 and 2000. On the basis of this plan the government was not only speculating that hydroelectric power would satisfy future demand, but with the completion of the María Linda and Pueblo Viejo projects, Guatemala would be in a position to sell electrical power to its neighbors by 1983.[434] In terms of costs and returns, the water systems of northern El Quiché and Alta Verapaz had acquired a heightened importance in resolving power problems and costs in the south with power seen as an important export product. Due to the almost total reliance on external sources of funding, expensive technology, and construction expertise, territorial security became a priority in order to generate the funds for executing tests, determining dam sites, and estimating potential returns.

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[433] See map in Appendix Three.

The second form of risk capital beginning to operate in the north was even more speculative, but held out the prospect for even greater and more lucrative returns, namely the exploration for oil and gas deposits. Even under ideal socio - political conditions the northern lowlands and El Petén were expensive ventures for foreign companies given the lack of infrastructure, i.e. roads, electricity, communications, the dense jungle, and the remoteness of the whole zone from ports and airports. Furthermore, there existed no data on proven reserves nor where they might exist, thus significantly increasing the likelihood that exploratory drill sites would come up empty or not be commercially feasible. Given the high initial expenses of exploration activity, the costs of crews - materials and moving the crude to commercial markets, only large quantity finds were considered viable. The 1973-74 successes of Basic Resources in the northwestern corner of Alta Verapaz had generated considerable interest in northern Guatemala. In this sector, then, increased world oil prices augmented the viability of the potential oil fields in these remote areas, an added advantage being the nation's close proximity to the United States. What really secured interest in the north, though, was not additional discoveries in Guatemala, but in Mexico. By the middle of 1974, Mexico had confirmed that it had successfully tested for massive oil and gas deposits in the states of Chiapas and Tabasco, bordering the northern Guatemalan departments of El Petén, El Quiché, and Huehuetenango. The similar topography across borders suggested that all across northern Guatemala this deposit extended. As the Mexican state held a monopoly on its deposits and excluded all foreign participation, only via Guatemala were companies able to tap into these rich fields. With these events foreign oil companies and the Ladino state were further assured that there were large deposits of oil to be found in northern Guatemala and that they encompassed all the northern departments. What was left to do was simply to find where these deposits lay, no small priority when the potential to radically alter the bases of the nation's economy was at stake. In addition, the Mexican "head start" no doubt figured as a threat in exploiting fields that supposedly lay across borders.

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[434] Prensa Libre 27 December 1975.

By the fall of 1974, and in light of the Kjell Laugerud administration's agenda, the Christian Democrats were on side in advocating the exploration, exploitation and development of the oil industry and pushing for the rapid allocation of exploration rights to foreign companies interested in Huehuetenango, El Quiché, and El Petén. At this time some forty companies, increasing to over fifty foreign oil companies, had expressed an interest in acquiring exploration rights in Guatemala. Interested candidates exceeded the territory in question, and allowed the Ladino state to carefully select more established and prominent oil companies over smaller ones. Nevertheless, it was estimated that over 150 million dollars would flow into the local banking system from initial deposit requirements before any exploration even took place. Somewhat astonished, yet ecstatic, by the quantity of foreign interest in oil exploration in northern Guatemala, the President and Congress were able to impose strict new requirements on prospective companies beginning with the initial deposit and compulsory use of the local banking system, the drilling of a certain number of wells in a given period of time, and over 50% of oil finds belonging to the state upon extraction and sale. Other demands included absorbing the costs of infrastructure and of dry exploratory wells, and constructing local facilities for communities i.e. schools, medical facilities. Failure to comply with these regulations left the government with the option to rescind the contracted territory and turn it over to another interested company. While there were complaints by foreign oil companies over these onerous state demands, at the time they did not dampen interest in northern Guatemala and publicly appeared as a major nationalistic triumph in securing considerable potential wealth for the Ladino state as exploration proceeded. Further euphoria was fueled by rumors that the huge oil company, Amoco, was willing to invest 500 million dollars over three years in a combination of oil exploration and the construction of a refinery facility for northern discoveries.

On the one hand the Ladino state was positioned within a most opportune conjuncture with respect to existing and potential economic success and powerful foreign capital, a position unknown in the nation's history. On the other hand the nature and quantities of the capital at stake fostered a new set of security priorities if the Ladino state was to enjoy the benefits of this capital investment, a form of investment that required more than just the appearance of stability, but the long - term conditions of being able to explore and invest unencumbered by fears of major financial loss due to conflict in the rural areas. The fact that the exact whereabouts of this bounty remained elusive only exacerbated the requirement of "rural calm" across a much larger extension of the national territory, and thus encompassed a greater percentage of the Maya population in particular. Between the hydroelectric plans and the oil interests, the Ladino state was thus subject to new and higher standards in perpetuating an attractive investment climate, and this all occurred prior to June, 1975, when the EGP formally announced its existence in the Maya highlands.

At the forefront of promoting and ensuring the successful implementation of these projects and this vision was the military.[435] After having completed the road project linking El Petén to the south, the military remained active in road and bridge construction in southern El Petén and across the northern highlands. It also, in a fairly ruthless manner, imposed its presence in the Ixcán by asserting its authority over the region and directing the colonization and expansion of the coop movement at the expense of an independent coop movement promoted by the Catholic Church since the late 1960s. In northern Alta Verapaz, the military performed the same function. Out of this activity arose the image of a vast zone, denominated the Franja Transversal del Norte (FTN). Amongst observers on Guatemala there has been some variation as to how much territory was represented by the FTN, most underestimating by a large amount just how much of the northern countryside was implicated in this discourse.[436] The military saw it as no less than an area of 15,750 km sq, or roughly an area just larger than the whole national territory of El Salvador.[437] It extended from Mexico, or the western border of Huehuetenango, to Izabal in the east, and extended from the northern border into the central regions of Huehuetenango, El Quiché, Alta Verapaz and Izabal. For the military, it remained as an arena of unexplored and untapped wealth, i.e. petroleum, minerals, hydroelectric and agricultural production. Though designated as "under populated," this zone contained hundreds of thousands of Maya inhabitants about to be subjected to a combination of Ladino colonization and state - foreign economic activity, that included military bases, dams, roads, oil exploration, cattle production, etc. What was, up until the mid - 1970s, just an eclectic assortment of economic activities in the north had been molded into a broad development plan promoted and coordinated by the military. For the civilian - military coalition of the day, the FTN was not a secondary interest but represented the center of future economic activity in the country, which would alter the very bases of the economy. This vision of the northern highlands coalesced at the very time the EGP announced its presence in central El Quiché.

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[435] Tte. Cnel. e Ing. Edgar L. Ortega R., "La franja transversal del norte," Guatemala: Revista Cultural del Ejercito. 8, 20 - 21 (June, 1980) p. 83 - 86.

[436] Even David Stoll's recent book (1993) on the Ixil Triangle severely underestimates the territorial dimensions of the FTN.

[437] Tte. Cnel. e Ing. Edgar L. Ortega R., (1980).

Development and Repression In the FTN

The actions of the EGP in the middle of 1975 were neither dramatic nor a decisive blow to the Ladino state in any imaginable way, and consisted first of the killing of a Ladino civilian informant and then of a repressive Ladino landowner in the southern Ixcán. After this initial guerrilla action, over the next couple of years other foci became active in attacking police outposts, killing police officers, burning crops and extorting money from large landowners in parts of the highlands. The EGP did not remain concentrated within the highlands, and between 1975 and 1978 had opened up four separate guerrilla fronts: central El Quiché / Huehuetenango; Guatemala City; the Ladino southwest (principally in the department of Escuintla); and the Ladino southeast. In the capital the EGP resumed the practice of kidnapping wealthy individuals for ransom and assassinating police and military figures. Except for random acts of crop and machinery destruction in the Ladino southeast and southwest over this time period, the EGP never engaged the military directly nor disrupted the normal functioning of the economy. Of these areas, the highlands were subjected to a dramatic and decisive military response which included not just the heightened troop movements throughout El Quiché, but the building of military outposts and intense scrutiny of the local population by security forces. The EGP actions, though minor in content, represented a larger threat when it is remembered that the whole territory of northern Guatemala was in the process of being divided up into exploration rights for foreign companies and hydroelectric projects. As mentioned previously, guerrilla activity in the highlands had been known for several years. What had changed most within this time frame was not anything the Maya or the guerrillas had done, but the singular importance of the whole northern highland region to the Ladino state's vision of national development and wealth creation.[438] The Ixcán was no longer just a region of agricultural expansion into the jungle to alleviate land and food shortages, but was viewed as a potential zone of great hydroelectric and oil production in which agricultural investment had become a secondary concern. Due to this revision in national priorities, the local Maya population was even less of a participant in this broader agenda and more a presence that had to be tightly controlled and scrutinized in light of the guerrilla presence.

Up to the present there has remained the strong assumption that the violence that was to envelop the Maya highlands could be traced back to specific contradictions within the agricultural sector, while other activities i.e. energy and resources, had only a minor role, if any, to play in the emerging conflict in the highlands.[439] This assumption has held that the persistent problems of land pressures and shortages, the expansion of cattle production in particular, and the resulting disruption of peasant production in basic staples fostered a volatile agrarian environment, leading eventually to at least a peasant rebellion of sorts in the highlands or full - blown revolutionary support for the guerrillas. While Ladino agro - export production, notably beef, had a higher state priority than peasant or Maya forms of production, with what has been documented it is more apparent that much grander Ladino state designs drove the transformation of the highlands by 1974-75. In addition, a focus on peasant production tends to exclude the "ethnic character" of this development and the specific Ladino racist political ideology underlying the grand vision.

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[438] Certainly guerrilla strength increased over this time period, but did not in any way impede the implementation of the development agenda proposed by the Ladino state.

An early example of how the Maya population was to fair under conditions of extensive state - directed "development" was provided with events in the department of Alta Verapaz. Between 1973 and 1978 this department underwent both increased colonization and capital investment in a number of areas. The colonization consisted of both the resettling of landless Maya and Ladinos in the north and west of the department and the expansion of the beef industry. As transportation infrastructure was improved and expanded, conflicts emerged between the local Q'eqchi' population / resettled colonizers and larger Ladino beef producers (which included several high ranking military officers), and land speculators. On a regular basis over this time period protracted conflicts over land ownership / land titles erupted into violence, usually at the expense of individuals from the local or resettled Maya population. Despite the ongoing persistence of land conflicts, no guerrilla activity was initiated over this time period (or even later sustained), and the results of the "development" process were mixed. Along with the "feudal" production methods that persisted in the coffee industry of south and central Alta Verapaz there had emerged a Ladino - dominated expansion in cattle production in the north and west (and into Izabal) which provoked the most violent encounters between the Maya-Q'eqchi' population with this new industry. Despite ongoing disputes in different areas, Maya production of both domestic staples (corn, rice, beans) and agro-exports (coffee, cardamom) as individuals or in producer cooperatives was enjoying success. By 1977 - 78 the department was undergoing a multitude of economic activities ranging from the construction of the Pueblo Viejo hydroelectric project in the west, oil exploration and production across the north (including the construction of a pipeline from northern Alta Verapaz to Puerto Barrios) to nickel mining just across the eastern border in Izabal, copper mining in Alta Verapaz, and various agricultural activities. While extreme variations persisted in wealth and land ownership between Maya and Ladinos, concerted efforts were made by the government to resolve land conflicts, establish cooperatives and introduce state services. Nevertheless, the region was to experience one of the largest military massacres of the indigenous population, despite there being no guerrilla presence in the department. The massacre in May, 1978, in the community of Panzós, and the aftermath, demonstrated the "sensitivity" of the military to protest in the Franja Transversal del Norte (specifically Maya protest) and also the extent to which the Maya remained on the whole a "suspect" and "extinguishable" subject within the development plans of the state. The event clearly foreshadowed the prospect for larger and more numerous massacres and particularly how little the Maya had to do to warrant this treatment, which was not reducible to "agrarian issues," as the conflict appeared to be on the surface.

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[439] In addition to the class - dependency perpsective, see also Jeffery Paige, "Social Theory and Peasant Revolution in Vietnam and Guatemala," Theory and Society. 12, (Nov. 1983) p. 699 - 737 and Robert Williams, Export Agriculture and the Crisis In Central America. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986) p. 139 - 151.

On May 29, 1978, some 700 Q'eqchi' - speaking Maya, comprised on men, women and children from local communities, peacefully congregated in the municipal center of Panzós (located in western Alta Verapaz near the border with Izabal).[440] Their presence as a group was neither fortuitous nor spontaneous, having been informed a few days earlier to meet with the mayor of Panzós to supposedly be read a letter sent from the capital that addressed the issue of local land grievances between the Maya and local Ladino cattle producers. Prior to this request by the mayor, Ladino cattle producers had been intimidating and violently harassing the local Maya population, to which the Maya responded by invading and occupying disputed lands. This latter event had brought the military into the area to "resolve" the problem, and it appeared that initially the military was able to negotiate the withdrawal of the Maya in the belief that the land issue would be resolved through other government channels. The meeting on May 29th was to be the first step in resolving the land dispute, but within minutes of the Maya population being assembled in the town center, shooting began from the roof tops and local homes and continued as the Maya fled. The massacre left some 150 Maya dead, hundreds more injured, with numerous men, women, and children drowned when they jumped into the local river to avoid the slaughter. As in past such events, none of the Ladino population suffered any injury or death. The dead were quickly buried in two mass graves and the military then pursued the fleeing Maya for several days and several local Maya populations abandoned their homes and took refuge in the forests or moved to other regions.

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[440] The following account is taken from Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, "The Massacre at Panzós and Capitalist Development in Guatemala," Monthly Review. 31 (Dec., 1979), Michael McClintock (1985), and International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), Guatemala 1978: The Massacre at Panzós. (Copenhagen, Denmark, 1978).

While the tendency in the press (or within later analyses) was to reduce this massacre to a continuing land issue between peasants and large landowners, Gabriel Aguilera Peralta was one of the few to recognize that the violence and terror in the region had escalated significantly from the "normal" practice surrounding land conflicts, i.e. kidnapping, torture and murder of a few leaders by unidentified armed men. It was now a new level of "super terror," a "generalized massacre in full light of day" and "in the presence of dozens of surviving witnesses." As Peralta observed, this could only be explained by the new demands on the state's capitalist development project which required the creation of the necessary "social peace," such as preventing any development and mobilization of popular movements that could hamper the larger project. Despite international and national condemnation, "they multiply a hundred times, as far as the public at large is concerned, the intimidating effect which is the name of the terror game."[441]

The main weakness of Peralta's account, though, is that he fails to recognize the ethnic character of the assault, a factor that was evident in the behavior of both the Ladinos of Panzós and of the Ladino state itself. For instance, it was clear that the Ladino population of Panzós had become increasingly dismayed at an emerging Maya unwillingness to accept the theft of their lands, the usual Maya "peacefulness," as the mayor observed, being replaced by greater demands to the extent that "our peasants have got racist ideas put into their heads from the people from outside who are egging them on. Now they demand that positions of authority be held by Indians, and they even demand that the President of the Republic be an Indian."[442] Such heretical thinking (if it had occurred at all) and demands for land were largely resolved by the massacre, it being noted by some observers that not just the military had participated in the killing, but the local Ladino population. One local landowner and MLN party member even openly stated that the President and the Minister of Defense had "okayed" the massacre. The military's position, which was accepted by the larger administration, was that the Maya had attacked the local military garrison after being incited by "subversive groups and religious missionaries" to claim the land.[443] The Minister of Defense, General Otto Spiegler, further observed a most frightening insight for the Maya population at large, in that the General felt that the language of indoctrination and revolt was being spread by way of the local Maya dialect. Hence, the "land conflict" perspective does not adequately capture the magnitude of this event, nor was it just a matter of interpretation. For those Ladino forces, civilian and military, that defended the massacre, the problem was not just land but a perceived Maya assertiveness, an attitude that they could not imagine the Maya arriving at independently, and hence, the unanimity in condemning external forces of agitation. Maya complaints or protests were by definition incomprehensible and subversive. It was also clearly evident that by 1978 the military had defined the most basic characteristic of the Maya, namely their languages, as an expression of suspicious behavior, let alone certain defenseless entities that on some small scale attempted to defend specific Maya claims and lands, i.e. student legal aid, the Catholic Church. While several political parties called for an immediate investigation, that nobody was ever held accountable for this atrocity further attested to the fact that for Ladinos, it was just not that significant and held no implications for the Ladino parties involved.

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[441] G. Aguilera Peralta (1979) p. 22.
[442] IWGIA, p. 20.
[443] IWGIA, p. 23 - 25.

What was most striking about the massacre at Panzós was the new conditions under which this action had occurred. Unlike past massacres in various communities this was not a response to an angry uprising of any sort but to a peaceful congregation brought about by the local Ladino administration itself, accounting for the large number of women and children present. Furthermore, the whole incident was understood by Ladinos to have resulted largely from "external" influences on the Maya, suggesting that any Maya assertiveness or dissatisfaction with the existing state of affairs was considered manipulated and suspect, and needed to be dealt with forcefully. As we will see, such sentiments at this time, and in a region undergoing major public and private investment, were to foreshadow even graver consequences for the Maya peoples generally and for the Maya of the northern highlands specifically.

The Maya Peoples: A Community Without Unity

As of the late 1970s the Maya peoples were not in a position to broadly contest either the strengthening suspicion among various Ladino sectors or the Ladino state agenda for the northern highlands and its violent implications. Although the economic initiatives of the Kjell Laugerud administration had created more points of contact between the Ladino state and the Maya, they had not in the least opened up new terms or bases of communication leading to a Ladino reassessment of the Maya, and these agrarian initiatives were clearly secondary to the larger Ladino state restructuring plans for the highlands, i.e. hydroelectric projects, oil / mineral exploration. The Maya peoples remained constituted as a divided populace across a vast rural landscape, in which could be observed a heightened fragmentation at the community level due to a combination of economic and political - religious changes imposed from without. This is not an indictment of the Maya population as it does not adhere to the "strong community" thesis, only an assessment of their political status at a time when the Ladino state was about to launch a more aggressive assault on the highlands in response to a particular conjuncture of economic factors at the national level.

At one level the thousands of communities that cumulatively made for a Maya majority were still dispersed across northern Guatemala from east to west, separated by numerous linguistic traditions and by sheer spatial distances. In addition, the majority were devoted to a combination of occupations in order to meet the yearly task of basic survival, and leaving little time to participate in organizational and / or political activity. Individual communities themselves remained highly protective of municipal lands and boundaries, aggravating the divisions between communities and further reducing the possibilities of broad community organization within the larger Maya collective. At a strictly economic level, though, and in comparison to some thirty years prior, the Maya had become highly differentiated in terms of relative prosperity and affluence between communities (even communities separated by only a short distance) and within communities. This differentiation was only augmented by the haphazard manner in which the coop movement and other state agencies had been applied across the highlands. Consequently, between Maya communities there existed extreme differences with respect to general levels of prosperity ranging from subsistence production - seasonal labor cycle to complete extrication of communities from seasonal labor - subsistence production into cash crops, petty commodity production and small commercial enterprises.

This was not a panacea, as most of these more diverse forms of economic activity necessarily entailed the same long hours of work with higher, but not extraordinary, amounts of remuneration. The main difference with the former means of acquiring a livelihood lay in the ability to have a certain level of accumulation over time and a strengthened sense of "independence" among a much larger number of Maya families / communities. Furthermore, the increased wealth generated by new crops, goods or businesses was not distributed equally within communities. Clearly a larger percentage of the Maya were being drawn into the cash economy becoming more dependent on either the Ladino state or the highland marketing system, which had become increasingly integrated with the Ladino urban economy or even foreign markets. This stratification, then, led to the first appearance of a privileged but small Maya faction that initiated a critique at the national level of the treatment and discrimination of Maya in Guatemala society. While some crude Marxist formulations have suggested that this development in the highlands led to the creation of a "Maya bourgeois" class (little better than the Ladino bourgeoisie) that was to eventually lose its leadership role to the guerrilla movement, it is not evident that the Maya generally were ever organized behind, or even cognizant of, the nascent political activity among this small group of Maya leaders.[444]

The height of Maya political activity in the national electoral arena took place between 1974 and 1978, with the election of two Maya figures to Congress in 1974, one for the DC and the other for the PR and a third for the DC in the 1976 congressional elections.[445] This led to the formation of a small movement which in 1976 proposed the formation of a Maya political party, intent on garnering representation from all the Maya linguistic groups. What has often been understated was the extent to which this nascent organization, in proposing the party name of the Indigenous Party of Guatemala, was roundly attacked in the Ladino press and Congress as unconstitutional because it was seen as "racist" and fomenting "class struggle." Again, illusions to the "Maya - communist" subversive theme are apparent, and the formation of this party clearly raised more excitement and concern in Ladino quarters than among the Maya. Quickly the party changed its name and guidelines to become the National Integration Front (FIN). Although the FIN was optimistic about its chances in the 1978 election due to its open identification with the ethnic majority, the elections more than demonstrated that the Maya communities lacked the collective identity and consciousness often attributed to them, the latter view, as noted, lying wholly within the imagination of the Ladino population. While it has been suggested that the FIN lost prestige or legitimacy among the Maya by eventually aligning itself with the official party (PR - PID) behind a military candidate (in return for official party status if it won seats in the Congress), there is little evidence to suggest that the Maya as a collective held this "political acumen." In fact, the Ladino uproar with respect to this party's formation, suggests that if the Maya had overwhelmingly endorsed FIN candidates for Congress in 1978, this act alone would have been a significant event, wholly traumatizing the Ladino collective conscience. Such a collective act on the part of the Maya in support of a leadership committed to affirming the Maya identity and contesting Ladino discriminatory practices would have been a revolutionary gesture in its own right given the existing power structure in the country. Such an event did not occur, though, and in fact, Maya political organization never came close to substantiating either the FIN's optimism or the Ladinos' fears.

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[444] See Arturo Arias in C. Smith, ed. (1990).

[445] See Arturo Arias in C. Smith, ed. (1990), or Ricardo Falla, "El Movimiento Indígena," Estudios Centroamericanos, 32 (Junio - Julio, 1978) 437 - 461.

In the 1978 election, the FIN did not elect even one member to the Congress, and received only enough votes to have standing two substitute deputies.[446] The election result was not an expression of a collective Maya search for a more radical political alternative, given the fact that the right - wing MLN party made electoral gains in the highlands in the 1978 elections.[447] The election result represented what was still a fundamental reality. While the Maya peoples for the first time had an educated and activist core of spokes - persons who could articulate a dissenting and counter - narrative to that of the Ladino state and culture, the larger Maya population was immersed in a set of social and economic relations that left little room for their participation in this debate, leaving them marginalized and manipulated by more powerful Ladino structures. The majority of Maya communities were still confronted with an assortment of linguistic barriers to broader participation in addition to being divided by political - religious factionalism. The latter cannot be understated as it pitted "traditionalists" against a more activist Catholic movement bent on renewal (Catholic Action), and the two against the increasing influence of various Protestant / charismatic religious movements in the highlands. As there was no direct correlation between religious affiliation and economic status or political loyalties, these religious differences served to exacerbate community divisions rather than cohesion and unity. The Catholic Church in Guatemala did not have a progressive political presence at the national level, nor at the community level, and was often in conflict with Maya traditionalists and their supporters. Religious divisions often bred political divisions, further complicating the position of the FIN. Most importantly though, the FIN had lacked the resources and personnel to counter the established Ladino methods of "politicking" in the highlands. Despite offering Maya candidates concerned with Maya issues, the FIN in one year was not going to arrest the coercive and material influence of the larger parties that continued to garner competing supporters at the local level. The FIN's message was lost in an atmosphere where the large Ladino parties manipulated, bought, or compelled votes at every opportunity. As a result, the Ladino political agenda remained dominant in the highlands. Despite the Ladino concern of a "Maya collective," when it came to actual expressions of this imagined unity, there were none to be found.

In the post - 1978 election period, the Maya were not in a unified position to avert or affect the dynamics that were coming into play within the Ladino state. On the one hand there was a heightened suspicion of the Maya generally due to the political advances of the FIN and the appearance of the Committee of Campesino Unity (CUC). The latter was significant in that it was an organization comprised largely of Maya participants from the central highlands who sought higher wages in the agro - export sector and protested against military repression in the highlands and against the union movement as a whole. It was also able to later generate the largest labor strike by seasonal laborers in the agro - export sector. Like the FIN, the CUC was a remarkable political entity to emerge from within the southern and central highlands of Guatemala. The emergence of these autonomous entities also represented the lack of concern and general disregard of the Maya by all Ladino political parties and institutions, including the labor movement. Nevertheless, the CUC, like the FIN, represented Maya interests without having the active or conscious support of the majority across the highlands, their larger significance related to a combination of Ladino fears and left scholarship rather than mobilized supporters. On the other hand, and in light of the election results, the Ladino state was about to embark on a grand project to restructure the highlands in response to a changing set of economic conditions. Neither the FIN nor the CUC were in any way prepared for this eventuality and the violence it entailed. While it was more than evident that the Maya in certain regions were being subject to higher levels of military violence, they were not prepared for the horror that was about to engulf the northern highlands, nor should they have been. At this point they had in no manner provoked the type of Ladino state reaction they were about to experience based on political activity.

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[446] A substitute deputy only received a seat in Congress if the elected candidate had, for whatever reason, to decline their seat.

[447] This is a fact R. Falla (1978) documents, but Arturo Arias refuses to acknowledge in his efforts to create the image of the Maya as a revolutionary subject even though he relies heavily on Falla's account.

The Election of General Lucas García and the Conflict In the Ladino State

The 1978 election was a highly conflictual affair that left in place an administration with which various powerful forces were most dissatisfied. Under President (General) Lucas García there emerged an extreme division between the elected civilian - military coalition enshrined in the state apparatus and the private economic interests of agriculture, industry and commerce. As a series of externally - driven economic crises began to affect the nation in 1979, these different economic sectors became more vocal in their attacks on the "economic development" agenda of the Lucas García regime, leading to a spree of military coups, first in 1982, and again in 1983. Given the acrimony among several Ladino sectors towards the Lucas García coalition it will become evident that these "political convulsions" had little, if anything, to do with the supposed "revolutionary threat" in the Maya highlands. Rather, as during past economic recessions, military dictatorship became the only way to resolve disputes among competing sectors. Although portrayed on the scholarly left as a "revolutionary crisis," it will be demonstrated that there was no revolutionary threat to the existing political - economic order from the revolutionary movement, thus wholly differentiating the Guatemalan experience over this time period from that of El Salvador and Nicaragua. The high loss of life and the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced and external refugees which suggested a "revolutionary context" will be shown to stem directly from the Ladino state pursuing an extremely aggressive economic agenda in the Maya highlands that was accelerated in response to the economic crises of the time period. Consequently, we are not left with an account of a protracted and popular revolutionary uprising, but the testament of an increasingly vicious military attack on a denigrated ethnic majority in an effort to restructure their existence to the economic benefit of the Ladino minority. Hence, the placement and character of this assault will be shown to have taken place in the form that it did because of the racist character of Maya - Ladino relations in Guatemalan society and not because the Maya had become a revolutionary subject.

The presidential candidates for the 1978 election represented what had been the established political alignment since early 1975, the PR, and PID being the civilian wing of the civilian - military coalition with critical support from the Christian Democrats, while the MLN remained excluded. The MLN presidential candidate was retired colonel Peralta Azurdia, former military ruler from 1963-66, and an individual with no influence within the military, marking the MLN's continued marginalization from this important political entity. The Christian Democrats, after failed negotiations with the PID - PR, put forward General Peralta Méndez who was renowned for heading the Committee of National Reconstruction after the 1976 earthquake. The PID - PR - CAO coalition was a rather surprising mix, as it garnered support from a number of smaller parties (in return for official party status) and put forward General Romeo Lucas García as president and the controversial social democratic figure of Francisco Villagrán Kramer as vice - presidential candidate. Although critical observers of this period have been quick to refer to this coalition as a "right wing" entity, the coalition (and General Romeo Lucas García himself) saw itself as a center - left political grouping intent on deepening the reforms initiated under the Kjell Laugerud administration as a means of resolving long standing national problems.[448] Such a discrepancy can be attributed to the established perception by critical observers on Guatemala, which tended to attribute violence and repression to solely right - wing or oligarchic interests. What has been overlooked by this characterization is that the administration of General Lucas García was a bizarre combination of reformist action / state intervention and repression. This duality can also be accounted for by the fact that this was a nationalistic Ladino version of

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[448] Political ad in Prensa Libre 29 April 1977, and press interview of Romeo Lucas García in Prensa Libre 17 August 1977.

"center - left" politics, embedded in a racist society at a time when the Maya were increasingly perceived as a detriment to Ladino state development plans. Thus, on the one hand the cooperative movement was endorsed and expanded, large quantities of land were distributed to landless families, prices on an array of consumer and capital good remained regulated, wages in several sectors were increased, new taxes were introduced, and numerous state infrastructure and service projects were undertaken. On the other hand, state violence against labor, political opponents, the university and the Maya were to increase dramatically, and clearly out of all proportion to the "threat" posed by these differing social groups. Nevertheless, in a society where an easily identifiable majority had become considered a highly suspect populace, Ladino nationalism became an extremely intolerant expression in response to dissent from any quarters.

The campaign leading up to the election of General Lucas García had been a contentious affair from the beginning, as it was evident that the different business groups were concerned with the interventionist agenda of the existing civilian - military coalition under Kjell Laugerud and had thrown their support behind the MLN candidates. Early on the *mozo colono* family heritage of Lucas García had been a point of denigration, followed by criticism of the inefficiency and corruption within the various state ministries and the level of state control in the economy. The moderate platform of General Peralta Méndez for the Christian Democrats had brought the focus of the campaign to the contest between General Lucas García and Peralta Azurdia. The counting of the election results followed the same pattern as in 1974, Colonel Peralta Azurdia having an early lead, publicity of the vote count stopped, then a few days later the results were publicized with General Lucas García being declared the victor. Again that a major electoral fraud having been perpetrated was more than evident, and the MLN responded by organizing street demonstrations, threatening armed action, and calling for a military coup. The DC initially supported the MLN claim, but backed down probably in the belief that a PID - PR ruling coalition was superior to an MLN administration. In addition, 1977-78 had been strong years for the economy, including the traditional sectors i.e. coffee, sugar cane, cotton, and the various private sectors, though critical, were not willing to be defiant. It was also more than evident that the MLN lacked any pull in military circles, the military firmly behind the election of General Lucas García as president and the continuation of the state - development agenda. With the MLN's strong showing in the polls and in congressional representation, along with a heightened sense of an election lacking legitimacy (which even powerful sectors could not rely on), General Lucas García became president. His base of representation, though, was far more fragmented and insecure, and from the beginning of his administration there was strong criticism from various sectors. Thus arose a more visible breach between the Ladino administration and several Ladino economic sectors, a breach that was to widen considerably as the economy became battered by a series of external political and economic events.

Guatemalan Economic Performance and External Crises

As of the early 1980s this fostered what seemed from the outside to be a most strange configuration, for it appeared that at the very time the Lucas García regime was "threatened" by a revolutionary upsurge, a variety of "right - wing" business and political sectors were openly challenging the Lucas García administration just when an "elite unity" was surely a priority. The reason this elite conflict could become so acrimonious and divisive had to do with the character of the conflict in Guatemala over this period of time, in which there was no revolutionary threat, but a wholesale Ladino state attack on the Maya highlands in order to effect a major economic change and counter economic trends in other sectors. This can be partially demonstrated by a brief overview of the economic performance of Guatemala in relation to the other countries of Central America.

The "crisis" in Central America occurred at separate levels, initiated first in 1978 by the forceful appearance of guerrilla fronts with popular support in Nicaragua and El Salvador. This was graphically represented by the steep drop in each country's respective Gross Domestic Product (GDP), caused by strikes, protests, political conflict, a contraction in domestic investment, and capital flight. In Nicaragua the percentage changes in GDP (based on constant 1970 US dollars), were 6.3 in 1976, -7.2 in 1978, and -25.5 in 1979, and in El Salvador the percentage changes were -1.5 in 1979, -8.7 in 1980, -8.3 in 1981, -5.6 in 1982, and -0.7 in 1983.[449] By July of 1979 the crisis in Nicaragua had been resolved in favor of the revolutionary forces, whereas in El Salvador the struggle took on a protracted character that devastated the economy by 1983, ECLA observing that the GDP and per capita consumption had fallen to a level equivalent to 1960-61.[450] Owing to these two internal conflicts, the other countries of the isthmus were indirectly but significantly affected by the collapse of inter - regional trade in manufactured and agricultural goods via the Central American Common Market. This led to the first level crisis as foreign and domestic industries dependent on trade within the isthmus were confronted with a major restriction in regional trade, which had undergone gradual expansion since the early 1960s.[451]

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[449] United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America, Statistical Yearbook for Latin America 1981. 1983. United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America, Statistical Yearbook for Latin America 1985. 1986.

[450] United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America, Economic Survey of Latin America 1983. 1985.

The second level crisis took effect starting in 1979 as the world price for oil increased dramatically followed by U.S. interest rate hikes, and, at the same time, world prices for important Central American exports, i.e. coffee, cotton, bananas, sunk to levels not seen since the Depression after being relatively high in the mid - 1970s. Prices were not to recover until the mid - 1980s. This latter series of events notably affected government revenues and monetary reserves, and led to an increased reliance on foreign borrowing. The larger problem was that high U.S. interest rates promoted capital flight out of the isthmus, and not just from Nicaragua and El Salvador, leading to a marked decline in domestic investment in all these countries. Both Costa Rica and Honduras fell into this confluence of events precipitated by factors beyond their borders, reflected in the GDP figures. In Costa Rica the percentage changes in GDP were 4.9 in 1979, 0.8 in 1980, -2.3 in 1981, -7.3 in 1982, and 2.3 in 1983; and in Honduras they were 6.7 in 1979, 2.7 in 1980, 1.2 in 1981, -1.8 in 1982, and -0.5 in 1983.[452] Clearly Honduras and Costa Rica were experiencing profound economic problems, with economic decline and stagnation becoming an established pattern over several years.

Guatemala's economic growth and eventual recession parallels Costa Rica and Honduras over the same time period and not the revolutionary contexts of Nicaragua or El Salvador, expressing as I have noted the localized nature of the guerrilla conflict and the inability of guerrilla action to disrupt important sectors of the Guatemalan economy. The scenario proceeded as follows: in 1978, despite major strikes in the capital and charges of a fraudulent national election, the economy grew by 5.0%; in 1979, with the intense and increasing military violence in the highlands and repression in the capital, the economy grew by 4.7%; in 1980, when military violence was generalized in the capital and becoming indiscriminate across the highlands, the economy grew by 3.8%; in 1981, as the military launched its most devastating attack on the Maya highlands, the economy still registered economic growth of 0.9%; a decline of -3.5% finally set in by 1982, the year the military established full control over the Maya population and ended any possibility of pronounced guerrilla activity in the highlands.[453] In 1983 the economy contracted again by -2.7 before recovering slightly in 1984. Statistically the economy was showing signs of a downturn, but it was not being torn apart from within due to a revolutionary upsurge, nor were producers and investors evidently abandoning the country. This is not to say, though, that the economy did not have major problems both structural and in its ability to deal with the deleterious conditions imposed regionally and internationally, but fears of an "imminent" guerrilla victory were certainly not expressed in the performance of the economy in this period.

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[451] Guatemala in particular had consistently enjoyed a surplus in trade through the CACM, with an advantage in goods from its manufacturing sector.

[452] United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America, Statistical Yearbook for Latin America. op.cit.

[453] Statistics from United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America, Statistical Yearbook for Latin America. op.cit.

We have, then, a most bizarre scenario over this time period as tens of thousands of Maya people are being killed, displaced and expelled by military violence comparable to that in El Salvador and Nicaragua, regional and international economic conditions are deteriorating for important exports, yet the Guatemalan economy is still experiencing yearly economic growth and then a level of decline comparable only to the neighboring countries where no pronounced political turmoil existed. What accounts for this dynamic is the way in which the government acted within the economy and where production occurred in relation to the violence. Most notable in this respect was the regional shift in the production of domestic foodstuffs. Prior to 1978-79, the two most important features of the Maya highland economy for the rest of the economy were the provision of surpluses in corn and beans to other regions, and Maya seasonal labor for the agro - export sectors. With the fall in the price for cotton and a huge increase in the cost of inputs, former cotton lands were routinely planted to corn and beans as the government guaranteed high returns on these staples, preventing lands from laying fallow. This made highlands production inconsequential and led to the anomaly of major crop disruption and destruction by the military in the highlands while the nation recorded the first sustained period of self - sufficiency in domestic staples, even exporting some surpluses. In addition, the high tech and low labor requirements of this production along with the marked decline in coffee production, greatly reduced the need for seasonal labor over this time period and rendered numerous Maya "temporarily redundant." Major yearly increases persisted in the production of sugar cane, beef, cardamom, poultry, sorghum, and rice, most of which were produced in the Ladino southwest, southeast, El Petén, or the eastern region of the FTN.[454]

The Military and the Guerrillas: Contours of the Conflict in the Late 1970s

Since the statistical indicators do not confirm a revolutionary threat or level of conflict in any way approaching or resembling that of the neighboring two countries, we are left without strong evidence to confirm the position of the class - dependency perspective or an explanation as to why the levels of violence and casualties in Guatemala reached such extreme proportions over this time period. The conflict in Guatemala was largely a regional and localized event, focused specifically on different areas of the highlands. Furthermore, there were two separate levels to the state violence over this time, one that was projected at the Maya population as a whole and as a suspect population, and another more extreme form that took place across the Franja Transversal del Norte in an effort to restructure conditions for the rapid development of a whole series of planned economic projects directly related to the Ladino state agenda, and not as a simple response to the guerrilla presence.

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[454] See commentaries in United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America, Economic Survey of Latin America. 1979 - 1983.

Between 1978 and 1980 the military - guerrilla conflict remained confined to three principal regions, the capital city, north - central El Quiché bordering Huehuetenango, and central - west Guatemala (in the departments of San Marcos, Sololá, and Quezaltenango). El Quiché was the primary area of operations for the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), the central - west the base for the recently announced Revolutionary Organization of the People in Arms (ORPA), and the capital a center for both groups including the Guatemalan Worker's Party (PGT). By 1978 the character of this conflict had largely become defined in terms of a war of attrition, rather than the guerrilla forces having an increasing momentum that would see the military forced out of different regions due to a combined guerrilla presence and local popular support. The static but violent character of the conflict over this period reflected both the strategy and tactics adopted by the various guerrilla organizations, and the extent to which neither large sectors of the rural nor urban populations supported the revolutionary movement. The reasons for this lay in the specific placement of the guerrilla forces in the Maya highlands which, from early on, altered the whole character of the conflict from one of a class - based conflict to one that suggested an "Indian uprising." Consequently, this characterization brought into play a quite different set of dynamics than was portrayed in the class - dependency perspective. In other words, as much as the activist and scholarly left attempted to portray this conflict as class based, within Guatemala and among most Ladino sectors it was viewed through ethnic categories and thus evoked a strong nationalistic rhetoric that reframed the conflict in exactly those ethnically charged terms. This is not to say that different Ladino sectors at different time did not confront the Ladino civilian - military coalition, only that there was not a "popular class" momentum.

During the final year of the Kjell Laugerud administration and in the first years of the Lucas García administration there was a marked increase in strikes and protests in the capital. The most famous of these was the long march by striking miners from Huehuetenango to the capital to protest wages and working conditions (November, 1977); the two month strike by public sector employees just prior to the 1978 election; the public protests by labor and university students against the disappearance of trade union leaders and state repression generally (including the massacre at Panzós) in July, 1978; the violent protests by residents of the capital (led by university students) against the mayor's attempt to raise bus fares (November, 1978); and the strike by fifty to seventy thousand seasonal workers that partially shut down the agro - export sector in early 1980. These major protests and strikes were accompanied by several actions against specific business owners, and by the formation of the Front Against the Repression, comprised of leading intellectuals. Despite refusing to address the issue of state repression, the regime did move on wages (and in some areas significantly), raising wage and salary rates across all sectors and establishing a minimum wage in the agro - export sector. Most importantly, in the large unionized public sector, salaries were raised first in 1978 and again in 1980. As a result, the union movement remained highly divided and differentiated in terms of pay and working conditions, fostering different degrees of confrontation with the regime that varied from conflict on the part of unrecognized independent unions to a broad silence (if not support) from other sectors of labor, (the majority employed through the various state agencies and ministries). To the extent that the regime played this double game of addressing specific complaints through negotiation and income increases on the one hand, while on the other hand violently attacking the leadership of defiant unions, it continued to obviate the likelihood of a broad "anti - regime" labor movement emerging in the capital and disrupting the functioning of the state and economy.

Among Ladinos, the one unified base of intellectual and material support for the guerrilla movement came from the University of San Carlos, and this was no secret to the regime, the military or other Ladino sectors, i.e. the press. By 1977-78 the university and the civilian - military coalition were in open conflict, student leaders organizing the largest demonstrations against state repression and advocating radical political and economic change for the nation. Between 1978 and 1980 the university and all its staff and students were direct targets of the regime, military security forces and death squads, with hundreds of professors and students being "disappeared" or assassinated in broad daylight.[455] Despite the dramatic and heroic efforts from within the national university to promote dialogue while condemning the violence and increasing repression of the regime, it was evident that this was of limited effect when confronted by a regime that made no distinction between the "university" and the "subversion" in the capital. With the majority of the university's staff either dead, in exile, or threatened with extinction, the university rector in 1981 openly capitulated to the regime, reducing this institution's political prominence and the activism of the student body (with the regime guaranteeing the protection of remaining staff and administration). What followed was a protracted internal struggle and elections that visibly divided the university body, as the regime effectively silenced the most prominent and respected voice of dissent in the country. This success against the university may partially be attributed to the specific tactics employed by the different guerrilla organizations within the capital, which promoted either fear or apathy rather than broader popular support.

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[455] Prensa Libre 16 March, 28 March 1979; 15 July, 26 July, 5 August, 3 December 1980; 8 May, 2 September 1981.

From 1978 until 1980 the conflict between the guerrillas and the military in the capital had largely taken place to the tactical advantage of the various guerrilla organizations. This had involved the assassinations of hundreds of police officers and military personnel including the dramatic bombing of a PMA troop vehicle after the Panzós massacre that left seventeen young soldiers dead (the majority Maya). This continuing attack on the repressive apparatus of the state, which included the killing of several prominent MLN political figures, not surprisingly took to new heights the level of repression in the capital and established the horrible conditions under which other unarmed and non - revolutionary organizations, whether labor, social democratic parties, or anti - repression organizations attempted to insert a basis for discussion and debate. Other guerrilla tactics included the kidnapping for ransom of prominent business figures and politicians, and the bombing of various businesses and government buildings. Over this time period the guerrilla organizations active in the capital appeared to have the ability to act with impunity, with few guerrillas ever captured and their whereabouts unknown. While the guerrilla movement held this edge over the security forces, the civilian population and organized sectors bore the brunt of the reactive repression that accompanied these guerrilla tactics without it being evident that "the masses" sided with the revolutionary agenda or were in any way sympathetic to this strategy of terror and counter - terror that increased yearly. Most accounts, whether in the press, from political parties, or intellectuals, understood this long streak of urban violence as an intransigent conflict between the extreme left and right, with the state participating at many levels against both, thus leaving the urban population confused, terrorized and withdrawn rather than actively involved.

The conflict in the Maya highlands though, had taken on a different character by virtue of where this conflict was taking place and the strategy of the guerrillas. By 1978-79 the military - guerrilla conflict was a war of attrition, both sides taking casualties and struggling in various ways for support among the numerous Maya communities. The two main guerrilla organizations, the EGP and the ORPA, had entrenched themselves in specific Maya areas by virtue of the particular geographic terrain and not due to popular support or a history of active confrontation with the regime. The EGP was entrenched in central - northern Quiché, a region renowned for its dense forests and mountainous conditions remote from easy access, and an area from which the guerrilla foci could move with anonymity into other departments. The same condition held for the ORPA guerrillas who were entrenched in north - central San Marcos and Quezaltenango. Outside of these two regions, regions that were remote in terms of infrastructure and production, a sustained guerrilla presence was marginal if not non - existent (Ladino southeast, Ladino southwest, eastern Maya highlands, El Petén). From these two areas, the guerrilla foci were to move throughout the highlands and into other departments mounting a series of attacks on police stations, finca owners (including extortion), engaging in hit and run tactics against military patrols, and sporadically destroying farm equipment or burning crops. Due to the type of terrain in the core areas of guerrilla placement, a protracted conflict had set in (and persists within these specific areas to this day).

Furthermore, by 1978-79 the two main guerrilla organizations had initiated a more open strategy of "armed propaganda," the practice of occupying Maya communities for a few hours, giving speeches, buying supplies, executing local police officials, and then receding into the dense terrain. This practice, though audacious, was readily publicized and provided the military with accurate knowledge of where the guerrillas were and their numerical strengths. As of the late 1970s, nothing about the guerrillas' movements or tactics suggested that they had local support or that the Maya populace supported or endorsed a revolutionary agenda. The guerrillas themselves were evidently not "moving among the people" but clearly taking advantage of the particular geographic terrain in which they operated. Although this created the appearance of a movement with a large base of support and a political threat, it was evident in the functioning of the economy and administration that the guerrillas had little overall impact, with the exception of the capital. In addition, it was to become evident that the Ladino state did not perceive this guerrilla presence as a primary or immediate threat given that the extreme violence that was to be launched by the state was never directed at the guerrilla bases or Maya regions which most clearly bordered on the all - important agro - export and manufacturing centers of western Guatemala. Although such a matrix should have been the logical setting for extreme military repression, the actual attack took place across the vast northern regions of the highlands, regions that were largely remote and as of the late 1970s, marginal in overall importance to the functioning of the economy. The impetus to this violent dynamic will be shown to lie not within the parameters of a counter - insurgency strategy, but within a Ladino state economic strategy that emerged in response to a particular conjuncture of economic conditions imposed on the Ladino state from without.

Due to the localized, broadly known, and largely contained nature of the conflict by 1980, the Maya stood in a precarious balance vis - a - vis the Ladino state, their ethnic status and the guerrilla presence fostering a heightened sense of an Indian problem and fomenting the transition from the Maya being just "suspect" to being "subversive." As was noted earlier, after 1975 the Ladino state response to the guerrilla presence in the highlands became of increased importance as it coincided with the first broadly articulated image of the highlands as a source of great potential wealth and development benefits for the larger nation, in which the Maya population had only a vaguely defined economic role. The imperatives surrounding this eventual "economic windfall" necessitated a heightened and continuous military and security presence, to the extent that the Maya generally were to be subject to a vastly augmented level of Ladino state surveillance and intimidation, whether or not there was any evidence of a guerrilla presence. Thus, across the highlands by 1978, a variety of independent Maya organizations and supporters had come under scrutiny, and, as witnessed at Panzós, minimal signs of Maya defiance (rather than absolute acquiescence) were being met with more violent responses. Consequently, after 1978, it is not surprising that military violence against the Maya was to increase significantly as the breadth and depth of this vast Ladino state agenda acquired a greater momentum out of a perceived economic necessity to the nation. What gave the Ladino state violence its particular character of being so brutal, indiscriminate, and disproportionate to guerrilla strength and placement, though, was the ingrained perception that the Ladino state was dealing with a population that was always under a certain degree of suspicion. As we have seen, this perception was a latent but constant image in the minds of most Ladino sectors. What was to aggravate this perception was the series of "armed propaganda" actions of the two guerrilla organizations. Prior to 1977-78 the ethnic configuration of these forces had remained undetermined, but with the practice of occupying Maya communities, the composition of these forces became readily apparent. The press was quick to note that the Ladino state was dealing with fairly sizable groups of armed indigenous revolutionaries.[456] Such notoriety began to leave little room for Maya "neutrals" (or individuals opposed to both the guerrillas and the military) given the historical dynamics and perceptions underlying Ladino - Maya relations.

What resulted from this increased and overt conflict in the highlands was a spurious image of the Maya peoples, but one that was shared by the Ladino state and military as well as by the intellectual left. This image, though, failed to capture what the Maya were experiencing and actually doing. The image that was shared was a characterization of the Maya as a "unified collective" that either acted or reacted as a singular, cohesive entity. As a consequence, certain acts of defiance by a particular group of Maya individuals within a specific community were often assigned a broader significance or magnitude, suggesting that there was a much broader Maya threat emanating from such actions.[457] With this perception of the Maya, the intellectual left began forging an image of the Maya as a revolutionary protagonist based on a series of scattered events and preconceived views of the Maya condition. In this interpretation, a certain Maya "politicization" had occurred in the latter half of the 1970s due to the combined effects of an increased economic immiseration and the activities of the Catholic Church, leading the Maya to support the revolutionary agenda proposed by the guerrilla organizations. The problem with this interpretation is that there is little evidence to suggest that the Maya as a people underwent this radicalizing experience. Rather, what is more apparent is that in a few locales, e.g. central Quiché, the Maya communities turned to the guerrillas as a last (and somewhat futile) response to a brutal level of military repression and terror, the roots of which they neither understood nor had had any reason to anticipate.[458] Generally, though, the behavior of the Maya may more concretely be described as either "uninvolved" or deferential to the Ladino state and military, as seen in events of this period.

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[456] Prensa Libre 23 January, 24 January, 25 January 1979.

The reasons for this lay in two principal qualities of the Maya majority at the time. One was that the Maya as a people never had been, nor were, in any way organized as a unified collective in terms of their socio - economic experience, which varied by region and community, and certainly not politically. Only in the imaginations and discourse of the Ladino population and left intellectuals was there a Maya collective or unity in these contradictory visions, whether as a "revolutionary" or a "suspect" subject. Secondly, the increasing repression by the military in the highlands was not applied uniformly and equally in intensity against all Maya. Rather, there were specific areas where the violence was intense or on the increase, whereas in most regions, as of 1980 / early 1981, the military's presence was either minimal or nonexistent. Between 1978 and 1980, for the most part the Maya experience was largely the same as it had been, the Maya engaged in numerous different economic activities such as seasonal wage labor, petty commodity production and marketing, and subsistence or surplus agriculture. More common than acts of defiance were conflicts and land invasions among indigenous communities and between indigenous communities and Ladino landholders, involving resolution by the various government ministries. Some of the more persistent disputes between Ladinos and Maya over land had even been settled via government intervention, i.e. Panzós, Sansirisay, northern Alta Verapaz. Membership in the government directed - cooperative movement was still on the rise, and families continued to be settled in more northern areas of Huehuetenango, El Quiché and Alta Verapaz. In fact, well into 1981 the production and marketing of crops continued uninterrupted across most areas of the Maya highlands. For most Maya communities, both the guerrillas and the military remained remote or passing entities in their daily lives and routines.

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[457] Such actions included certain communities going to the capital to express their complaints against repression, and a couple examples of communities resisting the forced recruitment practices of the military at the time.

[458] See, for example, David Stoll (1993).

If we examine the record of political activity over this time period, again it is a testament to either a Maya neutrality in the face of the guerrilla - military conflict or more overt expressions of loyalty and support for the regime and the military. The neutrality was largely due to the fact that the guerrilla presence and military response was only felt in a few select locales, leaving most communities to continue as they had, concerned primarily with acquiring the daily necessities of life. More overt political expressions occurred in several communities across the highlands though, replicating a practice that was taking place in Ladino centers of the southeast and southwest. This involved well - organized and nationally - publicized one day demonstrations in several of the larger rural centers, in which the local population congregated together and through speeches and banner displays expressed their unwavering support for the Lucas García regime and the military, and their contempt for the guerrillas and "communism." The first demonstrations of this sort occurred in the Ladino southeast, and then took place across communities in the southwest and into the highlands. While initially confined to centers or areas of little or no guerrilla activity, they later emerged in areas of increased military repression and conflict with the guerrillas. For the military and the regime these were more than just a propaganda coup, as they clearly demonstrated the unradicalized or divided nature of the rural population and the extent to which the military could count on local and regional support in its conflict with the guerrillas.

In the case of central El Quiché, where the repression had become intense, the Maya response had been defensive as they attempted to portray themselves as neutral or non - partisan in the military's conflict with the EGP. To this end they appealed through the Catholic Church, or to Congressional figures and the President himself against the excesses committed by the military's security forces. One of their more audacious acts was when more than a hundred Maya individuals from the town of Uspantán invaded a session of the Congress to protest against the military terror that had overtaken their community in a military response to guerrilla activity around the town over a considerable period of time.[459] Clearly the contingent were not guerrilla supporters, the group simply affirming its neutrality and desiring a reduction in military repression against innocent inhabitants. Nevertheless, the response from other individuals and groups in Uspantán was to condemn the protesters, accusing them of being allied with the guerrillas. As the Uspantán example reveals, there was not even a unified community response when confronted with the military - guerrilla conflict in their community, the Maya response wavering between peaceful attempts at reducing the military's excessive reaction or submitting to the demands of this increased military repression. Clearly these desperate conditions were further dividing rather than unifying affected communities.

Even the infamous tragedy surrounding the burning of the Spanish Embassy in January of 1980 was not an act of political radicalization, but a futile attempt by a group of Maya families from central El Quiché for the military to reduce its violent acts against innocent Maya families. Having been refused entry to the Congress and the President to express their concerns, they occupied the Spanish Embassy to attain public recognition for the terror they were experiencing. Unlike with prior embassy occupations by labor organizations in the capital, the security forces immediately took an aggressive stance towards this indigenous protest and stormed the embassy. The embassy was burned to the ground and all the Maya protesters killed.[460] Far from generating a massive Maya response to this event, several Maya communities turned to more overt forms of proving their loyalty to the regime. Even after the Catholic Church closed its diocese in El Quiché in the middle of 1980 (being unable to protect its clergy) and the Ladino civil servants left this region, the response of several Maya communities was to affirm their non - revolutionary status in the thinking of the Ladino state. This included pro - regime demonstrations in the centers of Nebaj, Uspantán, and among the cooperatives of Ixcán in late 1980 and early 1981. In addition, as the military repression and conflict with the guerrillas spread north into the Ixcan, the continuous response was to demonstrate pro - regime / pro - military support through publicized events and offerings of gratitude or homage to the military and the President for their work in the region.

As of late 1980, then, acts or expressions of Maya deference to the military and the regime were still more consistent and apparent than expressions of defiance, let alone support for the guerrilla movement in areas that had been the focus of the military - guerrilla conflict for several years. At this time, when examining the whole highland territory, there was no evidence of any cumulative Maya response to this localized repression or anything to suggest that the guerrillas were on the upsurge. The military was clearly not losing any ground or control to the guerrillas as they continued to engage the guerrilla forces while addressing the effected Maya populations with a combination of repression against select community leaders and organizations, and local civic action programs. Only in central El Quiché had the conflict left the local population to contend solely with the military due to the closure of the Catholic Church diocese and outflow of other intermediaries, i.e. teachers, ministries, development initiatives. Still, under these conditions, the more overt Maya expression was towards demonstrating support for the regime. Given the above overview, it is not evident that anything occurred within the Maya communities to generate, or warrant, the type of military violence that was to increase to horrific proportions in early 1981. The impulse for this military action, as we will see, came directly out of an accelerated Ladino state restructuring agenda for the northern highlands, and as a consequence, explains why the focus or trajectory of the intense military destruction was not commensurate with the existing placement of guerrilla activity (notably neglecting the ORPA in the west - central highlands and Ladino southwest). It is because of the different motives that underlay this broad and indiscriminate assault against the Maya populations located in and next to the FTN, that in the aftermath there was such a diverse range of contradictory opinion with respect to the attack. The fact is that many of the Maya communities that were to be violently eradicated and their populations either compelled to move or be killed, had been largely remote from any guerrilla presence or military repression up to this point. Hence, their continuing search for a motive for this level of military violence is not surprising given that it relates to a complex interplay of economic factors which affected the thinking and actions of the Ladino state.

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[459] Prensa Libre 27 September and 29 September, 10 October and 12 October 1979.

[460] The event was remembered in Ladino circles because two former ministers under the Arana regime were also killed while on business of the Spanish Embassy at the time of the Maya occupation.

The Political Economy of the Military Massacres in the Maya Highlands

It is through an examination and critique of the economic policies of the Ladino state between 1978 and 1982 that the real impulse for a brutal military assault on the highlands is revealed, an aspect that has remained largely uninvestigated. Those policies account for both the why and where of the military destruction across the northern highlands, and for the extreme political instability among Ladino sectors that led to the 1982 military coup and fostered the political divisions and debates that persist to the present day. By examining the Ladino state agenda over this time period it is possible to account for the anomalous condition of massive disruption and dislocation of the Maya peoples, and the continuing expansion of the economy in the face of deteriorating market conditions outside of the nation. Consequently, the agenda and actions of the Ladino state over this time period demonstrate a comprehensive set of economic motivations for unleashing a planned and vicious assault on the Maya highlands, motivations found lacking in other accounts.

As previously noted, the Ladino state by 1978 had become highly intrusive and interventionist in the economy, having created numerous state agencies and ministries involved in financing, regulating and administering key infrastructure and development projects across the country. In addition, military figures were present at various levels of government, as well as involved in a range of development initiatives undertaken independently by the military. As noted in press editorials and private sector complaints, whatever the Guatemalan economy could be classified as, it was not a "free market" paradise. The impetus for this level of state activity in the economy had its roots in the nationalist project dating back to the 1940s, a modernization project that was more aggressively pursued in the early 1960s and then under the Arana administration of the early 1970s. The PID - PR coalition under General Romeo Lucas García was to dramatically increase and augment the role of the state in generating economic restructuring in response to changing international economic conditions. For the Ladino civilian - military coalition, the Franja Transversal del Norte was to have a central role in the economic future of the country and over this was where the Ladino state directed its efforts at the expense of the Maya.[461]

As of 1978 the Guatemalan economy had enjoyed sustained growth and high world prices for its major agro - exports over several years, factors which permitted considerable leeway for the civilian - military coalition in power, i.e. the cooperative movement, wage increases, increased state intervention in the economy. This also included a willingness on the part of the Kjell Laugerud and Lucas García regimes to take a defiant approach towards the United States over human rights issues. This had led to the suspension of all U.S. military aid by 1977, but most importantly, a strained diplomatic relationship did not in the least affect trade relations. Despite the controversial national election in 1978 and a noticeable increase in state violence, Guatemala's status as a "pariah nation" never altered the administration's ability to secure loans from a variety of international lending agencies or banks, and thus the strained diplomatic relations with the U.S. were negligible. Instead, the fact that Guatemala was coming close to commercially developing its oil reserves significantly increased the regime's ability to secure loans from abroad and assume a larger public debt in advancing economic change in the nation.

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[461] Prior to being chosen as presidential candidate for the official coalition, General Lucas García had actually been promoted from Minister of Defense into a newly created administrative position as director of development for the Franja Transversal del Norte.

General Romeo Lucas García became president under rather auspicious conditions, economic conditions that allowed the Ladino state to dramatically advance a radical restructuring agenda.

By 1979, as established agro - export and manufacturing sectors entered the first stages of a "crisis," the Lucas regime responded by expanding state involvement in other sectors, with a noticeable focus on making the FTN the new economic center of national development. The FTN had gone from a vision of potential wealth for the nation in the early 1970s to one of real monetary benefits and returns about to be realized as of 1978-79, this wealth beginning to take many forms. In agriculture, the eastern FTN was being transformed into a major cattle and cardamom producing area, cattle exports increasing throughout the 1970s and cardamom to the point that Guatemala was the second largest exporter of this spice (after India), becoming the largest by the early 1980s.[462] In the central - western FTN (or Ixcán), the combination of cooperatives and independent producers had increased production beyond simple subsistence to exporting surpluses in basic foodstuffs and specialized cash crops. It was this region, more than any other, that the military was concentrating its development efforts in establishing infrastructure (roads, airfields), as the region still held the potential for considerable land settlement and the extent of oil and mineral wealth across the region remained undetermined. Enthusiasm remained high, though, that there were huge quantities of untapped wealth. Thus, the military was playing a pivotal role across the FTN in either introducing infrastructure or transporting goods back and forth between the south and the north (known as Operation Ixcán).

Oil, Hydro, and Infrastructure In the Ladino State's FTN Vision

While agriculture had its place in this development vision, it was the combination of undiscovered oil and mineral reserves and the hydroelectric potential of the region that became the regime's priority. The major problem that persisted was the physical inaccessibility of this vast region, a condition that continued to deter or limit both foreign and domestic investment, particularly in the riskier but potentially more lucrative ventures. In this vision, though, there was no consideration of the Maya populations that already occupied or resided next to FTN. The Maya, already under greater scrutiny and suspicion, appear to have become perceived as an obstacle to the full implementation of this vision. Given the breadth of these development plans, and the state priority at a particular period of time, it will be demonstrated that it was this motivation that fostered the move towards extremely violent measures against the Maya population. In other words, neither the prevailing racism or suspicion of the Maya populace generally, nor the level of the guerrilla presence would have manifested this military action. When the extent of the Ladino state's plans and ambitions for the northern highlands are revealed, it becomes most evident how they impelled the massive assault on the Maya.

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[462] Robert Williams (1986). Fernando González Davison, Guatemala: La Agroexportacion y Las Relaciones Internacionales. (Guatemala: Universidad de San Carlos, 1990) p. 199 - 203. See also United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America, Economic Survey of Latin America. 1977 - 1980.

Despite the nation's continuing economic health due to strong world prices for the traditional agro - export sectors, at the time General Lucas García assumed the presidency in the middle of 1978 the country's manufacturing sector faced an important limitation, namely access to cheaper sources of power (fuel / electrical). The country remained heavily dependent on imported fuels whose world price had escalated significantly since 1973-74 and was expected to make a dramatic rise again in 1979. Although the Aguacapa hydroelectric project in southern Guatemala was near completion, the dam was only capable of generating a low level of power that would only put a minor dent in imported fuel costs. The much larger Pueblo Viejo project on the Chixoy River was becoming viewed as only a temporary, as opposed to a long - term, solution to the country's eventual power needs. When the world price for crude oil jumped to $30.00 US a barrel in early 1979, with projections of it rising to $40.00 US a barrel, a major financial and economic problem confronted the Ladino state as the implications for producers and consumers were dramatic. In order to offset the full impact of this crude oil price increase, the state itself had to absorb much of these increased costs. Consequently, inflation rates in Guatemala remained fairly low over this period despite the adverse external economic environment, but it was clear that the administration was unable to sustain this practice in the face of potentially higher petroleum prices in the near future. It was this international reality that prompted the accelerated development plans for hydroelectric power as a long - term means of erasing this financial burden, not surprising in that power interruptions and rationing were affecting production in the manufacturing sector and fueling discontent.[463]

With Pueblo Viejo still a few years from completion , the Lucas García regime proceeded with not just one more hydroelectric project, but three. The auxiliary works on the Chulac dam in eastern Alta Verapaz took place in early 1979, with the regime receiving a 750 million dollar loan from European and U.S. banks to proceed with full - scale construction by early 1980 with hopes of completion by 1986.[464] The regime itself referred to the execution of this project as a "national emergency" and proceeded with no debate or discussion. As the Chulac project was initiated in 1979, the government went ahead with two other hydro projects in the north. It completed studies and established funding for the Xalalá hydroelectric dam to be located on the Chixoy River, north of the Pueblo Viejo site, and on the border of El Quiché and Alta Verapaz. At the same time it completed studies with the Mexican government for a planned hydroelectric dam to be located on the Usumacinta River, the border between western El Petén and Mexico, and initially estimated at some 1.5 billion dollars.[465] The latter project was reputed to be the largest planned hydro project in the world at the time. Not only were these measures seen as necessary to attracting future industrial capital to the country, but to prevent the existing manufacturing base (domestic and foreign) from losing faith in the potential of the country. The rapid implementation of these projects was intended to demonstrate that the regime was serious about reducing production costs and ensuring an unlimited, low - cost power supply. Conversely, a large proportion of the northern highlands were then subject to a much higher Ladino state priority as large quantities of borrowed capital, and risk assumed by the Ladino state) entered this region to the whole advantage of the Ladino south and the capital in particular. With Pueblo Viejo, Chulac, Xalalá, and the Usumacinta projects all underway and at various stages of long - term completion, monies and timetables became a factor in confirming the uninterrupted or "unthreatened" completion of this one Ladino state agenda, thus putting a larger number of Maya in a more precarious status.

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[463] Prensa Libre 11 January, 3 March, 7 May, 10 May 1979. Complaints about electrical disruptions and shortages can be traced back to 1977.

[464] Prensa Libre 12 December 1979, 8 April 1980, 16 May 1980.

Unlike the other Central American nations, for Guatemala there was a significant "flip side" to the escalating price of world oil in that it made more viable the development of oil reserves, a rich potential that was still undetermined, unexplored and undeveloped as of 1978. By 1979, though, a major pipeline from northern Alta Verapaz to the eastern port and storage facilities in Izabal had been completed, and by mid - 1980 the first of Guatemala's oil exports took place from the few commercial producing wells in the north (discovered in 1974).[466] In eight months of 1980 the country exported just over 780,000 barrels of oil with an average price of $31.00 per barrel. The total value of these few wells was just shy of twenty five million dollars with roughly half of this value of commercial sales going directly to the government. For the whole year the government projected exports worth some forty million dollars. Interest among major oil companies in the available concessions of the government remained high, with several big name companies taking up exploration in 1979-80. Basic Resources expanded exploration further west from north western Alta Verapaz into northern El Quiché (Las Tortugas and Xacbal oil fields), the Hispanoil Group (Spain, Brazil, France) taking up exploration on concessions in northern Alta Verapaz / southern El Peten, Getty Oil (U.S.) in eastern Alta Verapaz / southern El Petén, and Texaco - Amoco in northwestern El Petén. What remained on offer were large territorial concessions, worth several million dollars each in initial deposits, in both central and central - west El Petén, northern Izabal - southern El Petén, and northwestern El Quiché - northern Huehuetenango.[467] Besides this new round of oil exploration concessions being finalized with several major oil companies, as of the middle of 1980 the large state owned French oil company, Elf Aquitane, was investing a sizable amount of money into Basic Resources to increase the rate of exploration in proven areas of oil reserves and production (southwestern El Petén - northwestern Alta Verapaz - northern El Quiché). As of 1979-80 the momentum in oil exploration was not decreasing, but entering into a significant expansion with high expectations.

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[465] Prensa Libre 23 May 1979, 19 September 1979, 30 November 1979, 19 April 1980, 5 May 1980.

[466] Prensa Libre 12 April 1980. On oil development in this period see also Alfredo Guerra Borges, Compendio de Geografía Económica y Humana de Guatemala. 2nd ed., (Guatemala: Universidad de San Carlos, 1986).

Despite the general interest in Guatemalan oil fields by foreign companies, what had slowed the pace at which concessions were being allocated was not the violence or conflict in the highlands, but the fact that since the mid - 1970s the oil industry had considered the exploratory demands of the Ladino state both onerous and excessive considering the remote and difficult conditions under which they had to drill for undetermined oil reserves. These demands had included a set timetable for drilling a prescribed number of wells, or risk losing the concession, and the "take" of the state which started at 51% and rose to 75% as the field was developed. Nevertheless, with the first exports of oil the regime had not backed down on its conditions but had increased the initial government "take" from 51% to 55%. Clearly the regime was confident about its ability to eventually turn these outstanding concessions over to interested parties, a confidence that rested in being able to address at least one concern of these large oil interests, namely the accessibility of the Maya highlands to easier and less costly exploration.

As of 1979 the association between the military and various foreign oil interests was quite direct, the engineering corps of the military and the ministry of highways working with the petroleum companies in extending road systems into the Ixcán region.[468] With the granting of more concessions, the desire to increase existing exploration and improve the movement of goods from the north, and in preparation for more hydroelectric projects, the regime proposed a new road system known as the *anillo periférico nacional*. This road and highway system was to cross the FTN in the north and extend down both the eastern and western sides of the country to be linked with a major highway system across the south. Initiated in late 1979 at an estimated cost of 300 million dollars to be paid for by the government, by June of 1980 this project had ballooned into a larger long - term project supported by the World Bank and banks from Switzerland, Italy and Venezuela, with a projected cost of over 1.8 billion dollars. Described as a "vital project," a "patriotic work," the "beautiful plan of President Lucas," and the "total solution to economic development," it sought no less than to radically alter the economic conditions and futures of some thirteen departments.[469] This immense highway project was rapidly promoted and advanced by the executive and the various technocratic, engineering and planning ministries involved in elaborating the expanding dimensions of this plan. Given the scale and costs of the project it was clearly contentious in light of mounting economic problems in other sectors of the economy, but with support from the construction and engineering sectors, planning departments, various municipalities of the north, and the executive, the project proceeded with little congressional or public debate. By October of 1980 the government had secured a 1.4 billion dollar line of credit from Canadian and European banks to proceed with the project.

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[467] See map in Appendix Four.

[468] Prensa Libre 10 September 1979.

Evidently the fortunes of the small - land holding Maya producers across the north were not the incentive for this level of foreign investment, but the potential from proven and speculative oil and mineral reserves that would eventually be easily extracted and transported via this vast road network.[470] The integrated success of these large investment projects, whether roads, oil or hydroelectric dams, were also tied to another important Ladino state vision that had emerged after the first oil exports, namely the initial construction by 1981-82 of an oil and gas refinery in which Guatemala would process from its own reserves the necessary fuels for the economy, wholly ending its reliance on imported crude and refined fuels. This vision clearly entailed the discovery and rapid development of several more oil fields given that the needs of the nation at this time were some 30,000 barrels of oil a day, while existing wells had a maximum producing capacity of only 15,000 barrels a day. Nevertheless, by 1980 the existing civilian - military coalition envisioned both electrical and petroleum independence in the immediate future, an outcome seen as a decisive "Guatemalan advantage" for the economy.

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[469] Prensa Libre 10 June, 12 June, 17 June 1980. See map in Appendix Five.

[470] Only in this manner could the Ladino state have marketed such a grand and costly project, and one that was certainly endorsed by existing petroleum interests. It was also evident that the most expensive part of this project was the northern road systems, as the southern system required only an expansion and improvement on the existing road network.

Given the level of state, private and foreign investment in Guatemala, and in northern Guatemala in particular, as of late 1980 the economic prospects of the nation remained extremely sound with a vision of imminent and significant prosperity looming ahead. This, despite the nation's "pariah status" and continuing antagonisms with the U.S. While problems had opened up in the CACM due to conflicts in the neighboring countries of El Salvador and Nicaragua, the Lucas García regime had sought to minimize this impact by refusing to enter into an ideological dispute with the revolutionary Sandinista government in Nicaragua and maintained existing trade and financial obligations over the vocal protests and denunciations from the MLN. Secondly, the regime had proceeded with a variety of projects to increase exporting capacity generally by building a modern port facility on the Pacific coast, and opening a modern airport in El Petén, with plans for a new international airport in Escuintla. Again, these were state projects worth several hundreds of millions of dollars. Thirdly, whatever might have been the defects and unequal benefits of the government's coop program, the agriculture sector was still showing strong signs of overall growth and diversification, with exports in beef, cardamom and other non - traditional exports rising and the nation nearing its goal of self -sufficiency in basic food staples, i.e. corn, rice and beans. In late 1980 the government put the number of direct beneficiaries from the state directed coop movement at one million persons, plans were underway for a "coop bank," coop training was to be expanded to include over one hundred thousand women, and a literacy campaign was being promoted through the coop movement. As for the FTN itself, during the first two years of the regime some 20,500 land titles had been established by the regime while several thousands of people had been relocated across the north and were awaiting land titles. It is evident that whatever broader image of guerrilla activity and guerrilla advances existed, it was not expressed in any disruption of production in urban centers or the countryside as of late 1980 / early 1981. Although the ORPA and the EGP had the ability to occasionally strike in various departments at different times neither organization had the capacity to expand its placement for any length of time, remaining entrenched or localized in but the original areas from which they had initiated activities.[471]

Despite the impressive potential emerging from these different economic sectors they were still largely just that, large capital "potential" with projected rather than immediate returns for either investors or the Ladino state. The dramatic increase in the level of the state's financial obligations in assumed public and foreign debt, and the extent of state intervention in every aspect of the national economy, was beginning to deeply trouble important economic sectors as world prices for traditional exports began to slide in 1979-80 and the international financial environment became hostile to Third World nations generally. Guatemala's coffee industry was the first casualty, struck by not just declining coffee prices but also by the spread of a coffee disease that reduced yields, raised the costs of inputs and required more time consuming and stringent picking conditions. When the Lucas García regime conceded to minimum daily wages for seasonal labor in 1980, and then threatened legal action against those growers who refused to meet these government standards, the coffee industry felt directly threatened and demanded that the government reduce export taxes and provide the necessary financial assistance to protect the industry against low prices, higher wages and the costs of combating the coffee disease.[472] The Lucas García regime, though, was neither a class or ideological ally of the coffee industry and its oligarchs despite the continuing, but diminishing, importance of coffee to the overall economy. The regime's attitude was that the spread of the coffee disease was inevitable, and thus futile to spend any money on, and that coffee producers should absorb the costs of higher wages and lower prices. When coffee prices hit an all - time low in the middle of 1981, the lowest since the Depression, the coffee producers declared a "national catastrophe" and demanded that the government drop all export taxes and provide the necessary long - term financial aid to cover the period of the price slump. The government responded by reducing export taxes slightly and extending some 120 million dollars in financial aid, while accusing the coffee lobby of misrepresenting the extent of its problems and attempting to establish a permanent "no tax" regime in this sector. Despite vocal complaints by the coffee industry and premonitions of an impending economic disaster, the regime simply ended all discussion and debate on the issue, refusing the financial bailout and tax reductions demanded by the coffee industry.[473] This aggravated not just this sector, but other agricultural sectors, since the moneys to the coffee sector paled in comparison to the regimes largesse in other more speculative ventures.

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[471] Commentaries in United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America, Economic Survey of Latin America attest to the guerrilla presence having no economic impact, aside from sporadic crop and equipment damage in the coffee and cotton sectors by guerrilla forces.

In the cotton sector, which was confronted by the same price decreases, similar criticisms and demands existed but were more effectively muted by promoting the production of corn and beans and guaranteeing fairly high returns for changing crop production. Tens of thousands of acres of former cotton lands began producing staples that required less costly inputs, such as pesticides and fertilizers, and were more cheaply mechanized, greatly reducing the amount of necessary seasonal labor. As a consequence, the country quickly went from a importer of these basic foodstuffs to self - sufficiency, even exporting some surpluses in the early 1980s. Nevertheless, the cotton growers' associations maintained a critical stance towards the regime in support of the coffee producers.[474]

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[472] Prensa Libre 6 March, 7 March, 13 March, 11 July, 18 July, 21 July, 11 August, 20 September, 16 October 1980.

[473] Prensa Libre 9 June, 10 June, 12 June, 27 June, 28 June 1981.

On a separate front, the manufacturing sector had its own amalgam of reservations with the existing civilian - military coalition. Although the state agenda at this time was being advanced to the advantage of this sector, there was a high degree of state compulsion with which this sector was uncomfortable. This included government increases in wages and salaries that went beyond the public sector, and the efforts of the Lucas García regime to decentralize the industrialization process by extending advantages away from the capital to other regions of the country. Furthermore, in response to the significant increase in interest rates in the U.S., the regime had reintroduced controls on the movement of financial capital out of the country and on monetary exchanges, and was threatening to limit certain imports to protect hard currency reserves. With the gradual slow down of production due to a weakened CACM and increased power costs, the manufacturing sector wanted more flexibility in setting wages and salaries and fewer regulations on the use of capital. This sector also maintained a standing complaint against the size of the government, the level of government intervention in the economy, and an emerging concern with the recent increase in public and foreign debt as a means to confront the exigencies of foreign markets.[475] A strong momentum was building for reducing the size of government and the spending practices of the present coalition, particularly on projects that did not benefit this sector directly i.e. *anillo periférico nacional*. The commercial sector was also highly critical of the regime, its concerns directed at the continued price controls on a wide range of capital and consumer goods, the reintroduced exchange controls, and potential restrictions on importing goods. Thus, by late 1980 as the election campaign for 1982 began, there was a formidable array of grievances expressed by powerful economic interests. Politically they remained divided on the specifics of a new political economy, but the spending practices and economic policies of the regime had clearly become a major concern.

With this level of pressure directed against the civilian - military coalition, the regime was continually on the defensive in justifying its huge debt - financed, state - directed, expansionary agenda in the face of mounting economic problems arising beyond the nation's borders. From early on under the Lucas regime, press editorials and private sector ads relentlessly attacked the regime for the manner in which the economy was managed. These ranged from charges against the level of state intervention in the economy and the dominance of state agencies and ministries, to complaints of extreme administrative inefficiency and rampant corruption.[476] The "illegitimacy" of the Lucas García regime was confirmed in the minds of several powerful economic sectors who, for the first time, became increasingly concerned about the purity and legitimacy of the upcoming presidential and congressional elections. To the advantage of the existing civilian - military coalition, these disparate protests from various sectors remained divided over the specifics of a new political economy and a viable political coalition to advance it. Clearly, the regime was not going to back down from its vision of a long - term solution to the nation's major economic problems by conceding to the short - term and particularistic demands of varying sectors. Having secured a range of financial resources intended to radically alter the bases of the nation's economy, the regime proceeded undaunted. The regime had acquired a significant level of "autonomy" or isolation versus different economic sectors, which even included a certain space with respect to the U.S., the latter an emerging concern for different economic and political sectors critical of the existing coalition. This autonomy, though, also heightened the importance of the FTN generally as not just the solution to the nation's long - standing development problems, but to counter the combined effects of low world prices in traditional exports, high fuel costs, and a general weakening of the economy.

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[474] Prensa Libre 1 March 1980. Some cotton growers' associations were listed in support of the coffee sector in newspaper protest ads issued by the latter.

[475] Prensa Libre 10 October, 11 November, 30 November, 6 December, 8 December 1980; 31 January, 4 February, 6 February, 20 February, 31 May 1981; 8 February 1982. The government spent a considerable amount of time defending its policies in speeches, news conferences and newspaper ads.

It was this more acrimonious political - economic environment between the regime and a variety of important economic sectors that established the background for the extreme political instability that was to set in, a level of elite discord that perplexed many observers. Such elite fragmentation and infighting appeared bizarre given the perception of a "threatening" revolutionary movement in the countryside and supposedly firmly based among the indigenous majority. This latter perception, though, failed to take into account the wide variety of military, government and private sector activities that were expanding into the highlands, unabated by the guerrilla presence. This activity included the military's civic action and infrastructure advancement; government investment in coops, land distribution and agricultural diversification, hydroelectric projects and infrastructure; and heavy domestic / foreign investment in oil - mineral exploration and infrastructure generally. Whatever threat was posed by the guerrilla movement, it certainly was not expressed in the performance of the economy generally or in the decapitalization of the very highland regions where this revolutionary threat supposedly emanated. By 1980-81, in monetary terms, existing and projected investment in the highlands had reached an all - time high. In fact, the decision to move towards a wholesale massacre of the Maya peoples across the highlands, or within the FTN, can be traced to a series of events in early 1981, events that were largely confirmations of the optimistic future Guatemala held in the new development initiatives advanced under the Lucas García regime. What further augmented the importance of this optimism was the declining prospects in other export sectors. The determination, then, to radically restructure the highlands did not arise from a real or direct threat posed by either the guerrilla presence or Maya resistance, but from a new set of economic conditions that needed to be created and maintained across the FTN if the Ladino state was to reap the rewards of projected wealth. Since the status of the Maya generally had become more precarious in relation to mega - investments and projects proposed for the north, they were to directly experience the effects of the new political economic conditions that the Ladino state felt it had to create in the highlands. In typical fashion, the Ladino state turned increasingly to the military as the instrument to forge the necessary environment for this new economic optimism.

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[476] Prensa Libre 12 March, 9 May 1979; 10 October 1980; 19 January, 4 February, 29 July, 24 December 1981.

This new optimism rested not just on hydroelectric construction and ongoing oil exploration, but a series of events surrounding the recent investment in the north. In January of 1981 a second consortium of oil companies (ELF, Hispanoil, Petrobras) made a huge oil find in north - central Alta Verapaz with the very first well they drilled and an estimated daily production of 1200 barrels, with the potential for some 10,000 barrels a day when the site was fully commercialized.[477] In addition, the oil discovered on this site was of a much higher quality than that being produced in the more western wells of Basic Resources, and thus was valued at two to three dollars more per barrel. This find was extremely significant as it took place in just over one year from the initial test drill by the consortium, demonstrating that the potential for quick returns on exploration was a high possibility, no longer requiring years of endless searching, testing and drilling. The find also altered the status of Guatemala internationally as it became rumored among petroleum sectors to be the third Latin American petroleum country (after Mexico and Venezuela) in oil potential, no small fact given the finds in other countries such as Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. The announcement of this find also came at a very opportune time, as it reconfirmed the vast northern potential of the FTN just as the multi - national funding and construction of the *anillo periférico nacional* began, and supported the regime's expensive agenda for economic transformation and restructuring. This event coincided with an announcement one day later that the regime was about to embark on a "gigantic project" to introduce and expand the availability of drinking water through a 300 million dollar project from the highlands to the capital in order to meet an anticipated short - fall in water supplies by the year 1986.[478] Despite economic problems in other areas, the petroleum potential more than made up for what were considered only temporary setbacks in other sectors, whether related to conflicts in the isthmus or world prices, and reestablished the certainty of the regime in proceeding with its debt financed, state development agenda. Within days of this find being revealed, the position was taken to proceed with not just the construction of one refinery, but with two, possibly three, as outlined in an ongoing government study.[479] Such a project was clearly intended for the north, close to the sources of oil.

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[477] Prensa Libre 16 January 1981.

Following this series of announcements, a curious "news" update was published in Prensa Libre, taken from a Newsweek article of September 15, 1980, which stated that experts had calculated Guatemala's oil reserves to be as high as five billion barrels, raising the nation's status to among the "twenty most wealthy petroleum nations in the world."[480] In addition, the article included the commentary of a Guatemalan investor that the country was the "new Saudi Arabia of the Western Hemisphere" and that a U.S. State Department official had remarked that the development of Guatemala's reserves were what the U.S. needed to confront the O.P.E.C. monopoly. A geological map of the nation further confirmed the existence of large oil fields extending from southern Mexico across El Petén and northern Alta Verapaz, El Quiché, Izabal and Huehuetenango. The reprint of this Newsweek article was curious since on the one hand it more than substantiated the economic prediction of the regime by observing that oil revenues were second only to coffee exports, and this despite the regime restricting exports to some 5,500 barrels a day. On the other hand, the news release was an indictment of the regime's handling of this incredible potential wealth in that the strict regulations surrounding oil exploration, i.e. construction of roads, schools and hospitals in areas of exploration, troubled existing and potential oil companies in addition to the low export levels being permitted. The companies wanted to export at least 15,000 barrels a day and were critical of the state's percentage take on export sales. Essentially the civilian - military coalition was put on notice for its overly nationalistic and statist approach to the development of the oil industry, and, at least rhetorically, there was a push towards a diplomatic reconciliation with the United States with suggestions of beneficial returns in "petroleum assistance" in a larger strategic war over petroleum reserves with

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[478] Prensa Libre 17 January 1981.
[479] Prensa Libre 28 January 1981.
[480] Prensa Libre 1 February 1981.

O.P.E.C. Clearly the vaguely defined "new right," or sectors critical of the regime, had powerful allies. Nevertheless, the news release left little doubt that the regime in power had the financial security to proceed with numerous other mega - projects and development initiatives, even if it lacked the support of various economic sectors in the country.

Then, in early April, 1981, another major oil find took place in the northwestern corner of El Petén in the Texaco - Amoco concession, which further solidified Guatemala's oil future. Although the two wells only had an initial level of 500 barrels a day, the real excitement surrounding this find rested on the depth of the discovery, being one half the drilling distance of the other sites and thus representing a significantly lower exploration investment and cost to commercial return. It also demonstrated that the department of El Petén had sizable commercial potential, and further verified that oil lay beneath all the lowland regions that extended from northern Huehuetenango to Izabal, and across El Petén into Mexico. With this discovery government officials declared Guatemala close to realizing self - sufficiency in energy sources, with the ability to greatly reduce the "high cost of life" when the nation began refining and consuming its own oil reserves. Studies for the first refinery were "advanced" as the regime proclaimed a "grand future" ahead.[481] Given the rapidity and size of the finds on recently granted concessions, the regime's optimism for the petroleum industry and its potential spin - offs were never as secure and positive as they were in early 1981.

With this level of expectation, then, surrounding the multi - faceted state development plans across the northern highlands and El Petén, the regime had a powerful motivation to impose the necessary "social peace" against the existing guerrilla presence and "suspect" Maya populations inhabiting these regions. The oil, hydroelectric and infrastructure projects were not marginal concerns, but the primary high investment stakes for the Ladino civilian - military coalition in and around the FTN, a region that was to raise the international status of the nation generally. Up until early 1981 this set of priorities could be seen as directly relating to the intensity of the state violence employed within various regions. For the ORPA located in the central - west highlands, the conflict proceeded in manner expected and with a requisite level of military activity, much of it a reaction to specific "armed propaganda" tactics or attacks on fincas by the ORPA. In contrast, the EGP and surrounding Maya populations had to contend with a much higher level of military activity and repression involving a combination of civic action programs and extreme repression at times. As of late 1980, the military had intensified and generalized the repression to such an extent in central El Quiché that the majority of civilian institutions had simply left the region. At this time the security forces of the military had already committed several small - scale massacres and initiated an internal migration of Maya in specific areas of intense repression.

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[481] Prensa Libre 11April 1981.

In contrast, nothing comparable in terms of the level of repression had taken place in the central - west highlands, and reveals to some extent the direction this conflict likely would have taken in the northern highlands as well had not there existed the enormous Ladino state agenda for restructuring of the FTN within the exercise of military repression. Maya populations located within or approximate to the FTN were increasingly subject to a generalized military terror regardless of their proximity to specific conflicts between the military and the guerrillas. The dramatic escalation of the military's violence against the Maya populations of the FTN, though, can be traced to a couple of actions by the EGP guerrillas in April of 1981, shortly after the enthusiasm following the recent oil finds. In the middle of April a small cadre of guerrillas launched an attack on an oil site located in western Alta Verapaz. The attack only consisted of placing an explosive charge on a processing plant, briefly interrupting production for a few days. Although this guerrilla action hardly represented a strong or decisive attack on the military or the Ladino state, the reaction in the capital and from the regime was quite different, this being considered a most "unpatriotic" and scandalous act since in the words of the President of the Congress, "We need to have a major production of petroleum in order to achieve the salvation of Guatemala."[482] This guerrilla action was followed up a short time later with a failed attempt on the pipeline in northern Alta Verapaz. While this was the one and only instance of a guerrilla attack on the emerging oil industry, it was significant in light of the existing risky investment climate for oil exploration in Guatemala generally, and the persistent complaints that oil companies had against the Ladino state. Such an action markedly heightened the investment insecurity that prevailed, and the regime turned to the most violent solution it could imagine in establishing a secure exploration and production environment.

Up until this point there was certainly strong evidence that specific Maya communities of the FTN were experiencing a greater level of military repression than the Maya of the central - western highlands. After this guerrilla action it became more than evident that two very different military strategies were utilized with respect to these distinct regions. In the central - western highlands the military continued with a defensive and reactive strategy towards the guerrillas, which was clearly successful enough given that it bordered on the important Ladino agro - export areas of the southwest and landowner complaints remained sporadic and minimal.[483] Across the north the military turned to a brutal strategy of attacking the Maya population indiscriminately, subjecting them to unheard - of levels of terror. This was no longer a military strategy concerned with either "Maya support" for the guerrillas, the relative strength of the guerrilla movement, or the Maya population as a whole. It was a strategy that was designed to thoroughly and deeply impose a military presence across the northern highlands in order that the numerous development plans of the Ladino state proceeded with absolutely no threat from the guerrilla or Maya presence, an agenda that did not hold for the central - west regions of the country.

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[482] Prensa Libre 28 April 1981.

The Guatemalan Military, the Maya, and the Franja Transversal del Norte

The initial military strategy introduced in this time period was a rather crude formulation, enforcing a simplistic strategy of terror and eradication with little concern for the long - term implications of so thoroughly disrupting a large number of the indigenous population. While a minor guerrilla action had hastened this outcome, it was evident that such a radical solution was imminent at some point given the decline in other sectors of the economy, the regime's vision of the FTN as a solution, and the amounts of investment capital at stake. Additionally, given the character of Maya - Ladino relations, it also flowed somewhat naturally from a deeper Ladino impulse of either eradicating or significantly diminishing the Maya content and character of the highlands, particularly in light of the economic factors in place at this time. This, then, was a strategy that had no recent precedent with the exception of the introduction of coffee back in the late 1800s. It was a new level of military brutality that could only have taken place against a particular segment of the Maya population, that segment that was by and large the most economically and politically marginalized in Guatemalan society (or "traditional"), the least integrated with the Ladino population and economy, and happened to be residing in a vast zone on the threshold of becoming a significant center of wealth for the Ladino state.

Under these conditions the Maya of the FTN were placed in a most precarious situation as the guerrillas, or the EGP specifically, were in no position to defend the population against such a broad and all - encompassing military assault, where the likelihood of ethnicide or genocide became a real possibility. Nothing radical about the Maya activities themselves had ever warranted such a "response," and even in relation to the guerrilla presence and actions the level of assault was all out of proportion to the accumulated "threat." At no point in this conflict had the military been forced to concede any area or region to the guerrillas, allowing the latter to prepare for a massive military onslaught. It is when the economic dimensions and ethnic character are accounted for that we may begin to grasp the reasoning behind the dramatic increase in military violence across the FTN and regions bordering this zone. Only then may we understand why these particular Maya populations experienced the type of destruction they did in this time period, a violence that held no concern for the number of lives lost, amount of property destroyed, and level of socio - economic disruption inflicted. Consequently, in the central - western highlands, versus the ORPA, the levels of military repression were expressed in those levels commensurate with a "counter - insurgency" strategy, but across the north a more indiscriminate and economically motivated assault began to take shape regardless of the degree of guerrilla presence.

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[483] Up until early 1980 these Ladino sectors publicized sporadic complaints concerning guerrilla attacks. By late 1980 and 1981these sectors were most concerned about economic problems, with no references made about insecurities posed by guerrilla activities.

By May of 1981 the effects of this more brutal strategy were being felt by the Maya communities of the north as the first of several waves of emigration of increasingly uprooted, terrified and displaced refugees moved into Mexico.[484] The decision to migrate to Mexico represented only one, but eventually the safest, response to a type and level of military repression that no longer discriminated between areas considered suspect or secure. Not only were the Maya of the FTN wholly suspect, but within the matrix of economic priorities of the regime they had become expendable and subject to indiscriminate terror by virtue of being Maya. Within this context, even past acts or expressions of loyalty to the military and the regime held no meaning in the face of this new level of military brutality. Up to this point, several Maya communities had done what they thought was necessary to contend with the increasing repression in the highlands that accompanied either state directed development activities or the response to the guerrilla presence. This had included, for some communities, appealing to the Congress or the President, organizing pro - regime demonstrations, or more commonly, to just "go about one's own business" refusing to side one way or another and maintain a regular routine.

Under the new economic matrix, though, communities that had seen neither guerrillas nor much state development activity were confronted with a violent military presence due to their placement in a zone solely defined in the plans of the Ladino state (notably Huehuetenango, southern El Petén, Alta Verapaz and Baja Verapaz). Consequently, larger segments of the Maya population were left with few options after the initial assault began, options which included internal migration to the south or capital, movement into the dense forests and jungles of the FTN, or migration to Mexican territory. This latter option, when initially exercised by the Maya, caught the Lucas García regime by surprise as it had to contend with protests from the Mexican government as thousands of Maya refugees crossed the border. The regime at first defended the movements claiming that these peoples were migrating for seasonal work in Mexico, which was not an uncommon practice except for the fact that the agro - export season had ended.

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[484] Prensa Libre 23 May 1981.

Out of this situation arose an unspoken bilateral agreement that remains unexplained to this day. At first the Mexican government threatened to deport the refugees, and later a small number were, but then the issue was dropped by the Mexican government as the numbers of refugees began to rise dramatically. As the numbers in Mexico continued to increase, the matter was turned over to the UN High Commission on Refugees. With the Mexican government remaining largely silent on the Maya refugees and their reasons for crossing the border, the Guatemalan military was provided with a freer hand to proceed with its attack across the FTN. While the first stages of this military strategy simply involved the escalation of violence against the Maya in specific parts of the FTN, notably in central - northern El Quiché and Huehuetenango, and the application of more indiscriminate violence in other areas i.e., Chimaltenango, Alta Verapaz and Baja Verapaz, later assaults more clearly incorporated a policy of destruction and displacement as part of the strategy to bring the population under full military control, complemented by other government ministries.

It was this initial escalation of violence that caught the guerrilla movement, and the EGP in particular, off guard, as the movement had never expected the military to be so willing to brutally attack and uproot the civilian population, and thoroughly disrupt and destroy the highland economy, establishing in some areas near starvation conditions. For the guerrillas the conflict had always involved a battle for the "hearts and minds" of the Maya population, not realizing that in the economic and ethnic calculations of the Ladino regime of the day, this was no longer an important priority with respect to the thousands of Maya communities located across the FTN. As a result, it was the guerrillas, and not the military, that were on the defensive and certainly in no position either materially or logistically to bring under their protection such a large population and area, particularly a population that was starting to migrate in various directions in response to the military assault.

As of early 1981, what had maintained the appearance of a larger guerrilla - military conflict that extended beyond specific locales in the Maya highlands was the continuing actions of the guerrilla organization in and around the capital city. The major limitation of the guerrilla bases in the capital was their almost non - existent relationship or linkages to the larger labor organizations and populations of the barrios, having relied heavily on student support from the national university.[485] As the university buckled in the face of extreme repression directed against the staff and students of this institution, the guerrilla movement was reduced to operating through a variety of clandestine cells focused on high profile and spectacular attacks and assassinations of prominent military, police, and MLN figures. By mid to late 1980 the guerrillas in the capital had taken up a bombing campaign against private and public facilities. While seemingly an effort to redirect the military's attention from the highlands, the negative effect of this campaign was that it prompted a more vocal response from within the capital in which thousands of residents rallied in front of the National Palace in support of the military and the regime.[486] As the bombing campaign continued throughout 1981, and support from the university dwindled, there is little to suggest that the guerrilla activity in the capital fomented a momentum towards a broad anti - regime coalition. Rather, in the face of intense repression, most unions, professionals, and popular sectors backed down from confronting the regime on a range of issues, leaving the guerrilla bases as the only expression of direct confrontation with the regime. As noted, though, their tactics were not mobilizing techniques, serving only to sow uncertainty and fear within the capital that prompted a mixture of reserved support for the regime or a heightened indifference and reservation.

Due to the inability of the guerrilla movement to become entrenched in any other Ladino regions, the capital was crucial to the movement maintaining the appearance of a multi - ethnic, multi - class struggle against the regime. As of the middle of 1981, though, these bases in the capital began to quickly unravel as the Ladino state's security forces became more sophisticated in identifying guerrilla strongholds in the capital. Between June and September of 1981 the security forces discovered and raided numerous guerrilla safe - houses in the capital and in the southern department of Escuintla, capturing large caches of materials (weapons, medical and food supplies, propaganda) and effectively ended the sustained guerrilla presence in and around the capital. With this devastating setback for the guerrilla movement the conflict in the highlands took on a whole new character, as it became clearly delineated between the Ladino state and the Maya highlands. What constituted the major Ladino urban and rural regions became a vast territory that was largely "guerrilla free," unaffected politically, militarily, and most importantly for the regime, economically, by the conflict. This accounts for the continued strength of the economy during what was an extremely turbulent and violent period, but a violent period that affected, by 1981, mainly the Maya population in the highlands.

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[485] For a critique and discussion of this strategic failing in the capital see Mario Payeras, El Trueno en la Ciudad. (Mexico: Juan Pablos, 1987).

[486] Prensa Libre 11 September 1980.

During the military success in the capital a new military figure rose to prominence who was to coordinate the most violent phase of the assault on the highlands and establish the bases for the various "security and development" structures that persist to this day in the highlands. This individual was General Benedicto Lucas García, brother of the President, whose promotion to Chief of Staff of the Military (second only to the Defense Minister) appears to have marked an important change in the military structure away from the regular army. General Benedicto Lucas García had formerly been commander of the military base at Poptún, El Petén, and his promotion represented the first major entrance of the elite special forces, or Kaibiles, into the highland assault. Under the General's direction, the military attack became not only more violent and widespread in its application across the FTN, generalizing the massacres, but also more public and promotional on behalf of the military. The new openness was due to the fact that the military's security forces were mainly operating within the northern highlands and against the Maya population alone. It was under these conditions, and strictly drawn ethnic lines, that the General could announce that the military's intentions were no longer to simply control the guerrillas, but to totally eradicate them, forecasting their imminent demise as the military proceeded to methodically destroy entire villages throughout the FTN. While it has been suggested that the military started in the central highlands, i.e. the department of Chimaltenango, and moved north, the evidence suggests that from bases across the FTN the military simply began destroying Maya villages and populations without reservation, promoting a major exodus of peoples from different areas of the highlands. The massacres in northern Chimaltenango and on into central - northern El Quiché represented only the most publicized aspect of the campaign under General Benedicto Lucas García in which the thorough destruction of communities was followed by strict military vigilance. The Ladino state and military reached new heights of cynicism towards the Maya in this period as it embarked on a much touted literacy campaign and housing projects in the FTN, continued to grant land titles, and even accepted a plaque of gratitude (from the coops in Ixcán to the military), acts prior to and during the all - out assault on the Maya populations within the FTN.[487] Such demonstrations of goodwill are not surprising, though, as it was an election year.

It has been suggested by some scholars that there was an inherent limitation to the military attack on the Maya in terms of lives lost, due to the labor requirements of the agro - export fields in the Ladino south.[488] While there is certainly some truth to this claim, what it fails to recognize is that the attack was not intended as a "final solution" to the "Maya question," but was directed across the FTN where the Ladino state's concerns rested not with the labor issue but with the huge investment capital at stake and the transformative qualities of this capital, irregardless of there being a long - term Maya presence or not. This was not a civilian - military coalition concerned with the seasonal labor demands of traditional sectors, particularly since the value of these crops and the corresponding demand for labor had noticeably dropped. In dollar calculations, these traditional sectors paled in comparison to the potential from the newly emergent industries. This impetus, then, towards the rapid and total elimination of the guerrilla presence in the FTN, which entailed either the destruction or absolute control of the "Maya obstacle," may be viewed as an expanded military response to specific developments in other economic sectors.

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[487] Prensa Libre 7 May, 26 July, 26 September, 7 October, 20 October, 25 October 1981.

[488] See for example Ricardo Falla (1994), p. 186.

With the dramatic drop in coffee and cotton prices on the world market the Central American economies were seriously affected, in addition to the conflict in El Salvador and the economic instability in Nicaragua, all of which contributed to a decline in CACM activity and limited government revenues in these nations. Oil price increases and high interest rates in the United States only further aggravated this economic deterioration. In Guatemala, though, the civilian - military coalition was convinced that the combination of hydroelectric projects and revenues / spin - offs from oil exploration and exports would save the economy from the decline being experienced in other economic sectors.[489] By August of 1981 the decision had been made to create the state agency PetroGuat to proceed with the building of a refinery in an effort to offset the costs of imported fuels. In addition to the ongoing construction of the Pueblo Viejo and Chulac hydroelectric projects in the north, some five million dollars had been invested in the Usumacinta hydroelectric project and external financing was being put in place for the Xalalá hydroelectric project. The main problem was that foreign companies were not acting on the available concessions for oil exploration in the FTN as rapidly as had been anticipated, a problem related to the perception of instability and ongoing violence in the highlands after the guerrilla attack in early 1981. Within this emerging economic conjuncture, there was nothing to suggest that the Maya presence held any significant meaning or concern to the regime.

Between August of 1981 and March of 1982, the Guatemalan military racked up an impressive list of human atrocities in the departments of Chimaltenango, El Quiché, Huehuetenango, Baja Verapaz and Alta Verapaz. Without exception they were all directed at the Maya population with no clear motivation behind the attacks on particular communities. Such was the character of a strategy that was concerned specifically with creating and maintaining an appropriate investment climate versus deriving support and loyalty from these peoples. There was no longer a civic action or local development aspect to the military's approach. Absolute and sustained territorial control is what the civilian - military coalition wanted in this period, and as a consequence the Maya population and their economy in the FTN became insignificant. Late in 1981 the military proceeded with imposing the infamous civil patrols, a system introduced usually after a community experienced an unexpected terror campaign or series of local massacres by the military.[490] Requiring little in direct military manpower, the civil patrol system involved the compulsory service of all males over the age of fourteen to expend a better part of their day patrolling as a lightly armed group in the municipality, searching and recording the movements of the larger population. Simplistic in its structure and brutality, it became so effective because it was imposed on a wholly terrified and disorganized population left with no other recourse but full submission to the military or a perilous exodus elsewhere in the country or abroad. The first patrols were not established in areas with a guerrilla presence, but in remote areas of El Petén where the local Ladino populations voluntarily formed them. After El Petén, the first forcefully imposed civil patrols on the Maya were created in Alta Verapaz and Baja Verapaz, and it was several months before this system was initiated in regions with an actual guerrilla presence. It was also reported that Ladino civilians from the south began moving into highland regions to supervise and direct the implementation of the civil patrol system among the Maya populace.[491]

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[489] Prensa Libre 17 July 1981, 3 November 1981.

With the gradual introduction of this system across more of the Maya populated FTN, the military was gradually instituting that measure of cultural and territorial security the military - civilian coalition considered necessary for its larger economic agenda. What is most disturbing in this turn of events was the unanimity among Ladino sectors with respect to the tactics and measures adopted by the military against the Maya, indicating that a latent sentiment had become more overt.[492] Whatever means the military utilized against the Maya were considered legitimate given that the configuration of the conflict more clearly placed the Ladino - dominated regions against the Maya. This ethnic division, and the continuing extent to which the plight of the Maya was wholly marginal to debates and actions within the Ladino political sphere, was expressed in the fact that the violent military campaign throughout 1981 and into 1982 took place during an acrimonious presidential and congressional election campaign. Furthermore, while the Ladino political sphere was to be convulsed by a military coup and counter - military coup following the outcome of the election, nothing within this series of events ever altered the brutal manner in which the Ladino state related to the Maya of the northern highlands. Again, this relates directly to the national perception of a Ladino - Maya conflict, and not a class - based conflict, taking place within the nation, which served radically to alter the tactics and measures employed by the military. It was the specific congruence of ethnic and economic factors in this time period that accounts for the extreme brutality experienced by the Maya of the FTN, and not an assumed "revolutionary threat" or generalized Maya radicalization. With the ethnic character of the conflict firmly established within the thinking and tactics of the Ladino state, and the military proceeding with a most radical solution to the ethnic and economic question in the FTN, the stage was set for a thorough restructuring of the highlands. What prevented this outcome, as we will see, was not an effective guerrilla - Maya response but a Ladino elite response, wholly unrelated to or concerned with the military attack on the Maya. As a consequence, the attack on the Maya was to be unaffected by the political turmoil that emerged in the capital, an expression of the unanimity across Ladino sectors for these extreme measures in dealing with a perceived Maya threat.

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[490] Some debate had preceded this decision to impose civil patrols on the Maya population, General Benedicto Lucas García preferring to increase the size of the military to over 100,000 personnel in order to impose the level of continuous security and control over the Maya he desired in the highlands.

[491] See Michael McClintock (1985), p. 249, and LAWR 11 December 1981.

[492] Such Ladino sectors include the major political parties, the press, and various business associations.

The 1982 Election, Military Coup and Counter - Coup

By early 1981 as the election campaign got under way, various Ladino political parties and the dominant economic sectors had serious reservations about the existing civilian - military coalition with respect to the regime's management of the economy and the continuation of an extravagant development agenda in light of deteriorating economic conditions arising from external dynamics. Cumulatively, there was a fairly extensive list of grievances from the differing economic sectors. The still powerful coffee sector was the most vocal critic, its concerns continually rebuffed and denigrated by the regime, leading this sector to contend that the regime was mismanaging the agricultural sector generally with excessive intervention and regulations, namely fixed wage rates for seasonal laborers.[493] The regime's unwillingness to aid and protect this sector against the spreading coffee disease and record low prices only confirmed the latter's desire for a major political change at the top. Other agricultural sectors had lined up behind the coffee industry on certain demands, notably greater financial assistance from the regime, rather than having to turn to the banks. It appeared that these agricultural sectors, confronted by a volatile international market, wanted assurances that government funds would be available for long - term security, a condition that the regime was unwilling to commit itself to despite huge financial outlays on other, more speculative, ventures. Thus, there was a general sense among agricultural export sectors that the regime no longer saw this side of the economy as the state's priority, as in the past.

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[493] Prensa Libre 24 December 1981.

On a separate front, Guatemala's manufacturing sector was extremely concerned with efforts by the regime to impose a new system and higher rate of taxation, a measure they considered both detrimental with decreased market activity, and unnecessary if the government simply reduced its own spending activity in the face of a looming recession.[494] The introduction of exchange and capital controls by the regime, along with legislated wage and salary increases and efforts at industrial decentralization, fostered a certain amount of friction with the manufacturing sector. As the problems with external markets began to be felt in 1981, this sector in particular wanted a significant "freeing up" of the economy, believing that the existing level of state intervention prevented them from competing internationally. In the import - export sector and retail sector, the continuance of price controls on many goods and the possibility of import restrictions being imposed to ease pressures on Guatemala's "hard currency" reserves only aggravated these sectors.[495] While specific concerns varied by sector, cumulatively they represented a significant degree of discontent.

By 1981, the division between these different sectors and the regime surrounded the debt spending and expanded state activity and intervention in the face of an imminent recession. With decreasing rates of growth each year and contracting foreign markets, these sectors wanted the introduction of a new "political economy." Historically, the nation's elite had prided itself on its fiscal conservatism in government, and had always addressed economic recessions through reduced government spending, layoffs, and wage rollbacks. Confronted with a regime that was seen to be failing in its ability to adjust to the "economic realities" of the regional and international market place, there was a general and increasing sense among these sectors that the interventionist and extravagant spending practices of the regime would severely undermine the economy. Continuous ads and editorials decried inefficiencies and corruption in state ministries, mounting government debts, and regulations that were seen as restricting Guatemala's competitive edge in every sector, including the development of its petroleum resources. No doubt there was also some concern with the strained relations with the U.S., as the Lucas García regime remained seen as a "pariah state," by even the Reagan administration. Clearly, some sectors, notably on the right, wanted to establish more cordial relations as a means to acquire a preferential economic status with the U.S. and forms of direct aid. Whatever the existing civilian - military coalition, it was not a healthy representation of Ladino elite interests. Consequently, the 1982 elections took on great significance as a mechanism and means to bring about a change in economic policy, promoting a deep concern among elite Ladino sectors with the "legitimacy" of the process and the honesty of the ballot count.

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[494] Impressions drawn from a series of industry ad protests and editorials in Prensa Libre over 1980 and 1981.

[495] Impressions drawn from ad protests by these sectors over 1980 and 1981 in Prensa Libre.

The first expression of this broad elite discord with the regime was the decision by all the parties, with the exception of the official coalition, that they put forward civilian presidential candidates, refusing to advance military figures. A second expression was the paring down of the official coalition to just two main parties, the PID and the PR, as the CAN party (formerly the CAO) struck out on its own and adopted an anti - interventionist and free market platform in line with Ladino elite sentiments.[496] Both the MLN and the Christian Democrats also rejected any alliance with the official coalition. The MLN continued to represent the broader concerns of the traditional agricultural sectors over state support, in addition to a more pro - U.S. stance, while the CAN clearly represented the grievances of various industrial and commercial interests. The Christian Democrats, allied with the new National Renovation Party led by Alejandro Maldonado (a former MLN member expelled for his "progressive views"), advanced a campaign that attacked the spending practices and corruption of the existing coalition and its mishandling of the economy. The official PID - PR coalition, led by former defense minister General Aníbal Guevara, defended the existing economic record of the coalition and the initiation of its larger project for the FTN and the economy generally.[497] Thus, the battle lines were drawn and the election campaign became an extremely acrimonious affair over the economic future of the country. The opposition was only strengthened when the major paper Prensa Libre ran, for the first time, an election poll in the capital late in the election which demonstrated that the urban population wanted a civilian president and that General Aníbal Guevara was running fourth in popular opinion behind all other candidates, Alejandro Maldonado being the front runner. Emboldened by this knowledge, it was assumed that a political change was inevitable.

The election process itself revealed the salience of the ethnic division as it demonstrated the unanimity among Ladino sectors that the extreme measures adopted by the military were appropriate. Even the Christian Democratic party, which had maintained a vocal position against the political violence in Guatemalan society, only opposed the military's tactics to the extent that their Maya supporters in the highlands had been killed in the indiscriminate application of the military's terror campaign, thus destroying the party's links to its voter base in parts of the highlands. A combination of ethnic and economic perceptions surely fueled this unanimity, and hence, the election campaign never touched on the issue of how a large number of the Maya were being treated generally or brutally attacked in specific areas. In this context it was starkly revealed how a perceived Maya threat and / or economic necessity led to a certain Ladino consensus as to the desirability of such measures. There was, then, a Ladino unity on the military's violent measures against the Maya even though, and in sharp contrast, there existed a firm opposition to the economic policies of the coalition in power.

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[496] Prensa Libre 18 August, 15 September, 1 October 1980; 12 February, 14 February, 16 February 1981.
[497] Prensa Libre 6 October 1981.

The election process in this time period revealed a few remarkable aspects about the political sphere in Guatemala and the ongoing character of Maya - Ladino relations. First, there was the extent to which election campaigns and debates continued with no reference to what the Maya were experiencing despite it being a highly disputed and contentious electoral process. Second, the election campaign went on in both urban and rural areas, with the odd excursion in the northern highlands, unhindered by either the increasing violence against the Maya of the highlands or the presence of the guerrilla forces. And thirdly, there was no "state of siege" or military restrictions on election activity, the election process itself being adequate justification for not imposing more repressive measures generally. What this attests to is the high degree of legitimacy the process had among Ladino sectors despite the increasing violence and massacres against the Maya, and the marginal impact the guerrilla presence had on the Ladino political sphere. It is also evident that had the ballot count following the election been deemed legal, the Ladino political system would not have convulsed in the manner it did despite the high level of military atrocities committed in the highlands. Thus, neither the guerrilla activities, mounting Maya deaths, nor military violence in the highlands ever affected, in the minds of most Ladinos, the national election process or its outcome. Among most Ladino sectors, this election had as much, if not more, significance as any election in the past.

What spoiled this outcome was the decision by the PID - PR coalition to achieve not just a slim defeat in the face of massive opposition, but a major electoral victory in favor of General Aníbal Guevara and the official coalition against all sentiment pointing to a defeat. Unlike in past elections, the opposition parties refused to be divided, a resolve that probably stemmed from the backing of several economic sectors opposed to a four - year continuation of the existing economic agenda of the official coalition. There were, though, no qualms expressed about the military's violent rampage in the Maya highlands that continued unabated by the election controversy in the capital. The regime reacted to this opposition defiance by detaining and threatening important figures of the opposition, leading to rumors of a plan to eradicate these political opponents. As the extreme right MLN maintained a united front with the DC, PNR, and CAN parties, more turbulent actions were proposed by the business community including a series of temporary business shut - downs leading up to a possible national strike by commercial sectors. Given this coalescence of powerful opposition forces, a potential economic disruption, and condemnation of the election results from the international community and the U.S., the military's officer class was placed in an openly awkward position. Its important "mediating" role had fallen into crisis, having defended and appeased an increasingly narrow set of civilian interests. Thus, on March 23rd, 1982, less than two weeks after the election, a military coup took place against the regime of General Lucas García and the PID - PR coalition, annulling the election results and placing the military directly in charge.

Considerable scholarly and journalistic confusion continues to surround this event and the military's subsequent coup in August of 1983.[498] On the left, the tendency has been to see this event as an expression of a larger revolutionary context in which a more overt military presence and repression was needed to stay the revolutionary groundswell. Clearly, as the evidence and course of events suggests, this was not the case. More penetrating critiques have viewed this as the military's response to the corrupt enrichment of a specific military faction, which was seen as a hindrance to the war against the guerrillas and fostering disunity within the military.[499] The coup, then, was an attempt to reunite the military as junior officers rose to the fore to contest the military's internal disintegration and ongoing alienation from the U.S. due to corrupting economic and political alliances with the broader society. What limits this perspective is that the larger economic issues and agendas at stake are not recognized, specifically how the economic project of the civilian - military coalition came into open conflict with an array of powerful economic sectors. Within the foreign press there was persistent confusion as to whether the coup benefited the interests of the political right or the center - left parties.[500] As the cumulative evidence points out, the 1982 military coup was undertaken to realign the military with the views of the dominant Ladino economic sectors, the latter all in agreement that the existing civilian - military coalition no longer adequately represented its various interests. In this respect, the military acted to preserve and ensure its important mediating role in society. It is here, though, that all the problems surfaced simply because Guatemala was no longer a nation dominated by one or two specific interests. Consequently, this attempted realignment between the military and different Ladino elites became an ongoing and hostile dispute over the economic direction of the nation, a dispute that was only partially resolved by the eventual election of a civilian administration in 1985.

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[498] See Susanne Jonas (1991), George Black et. al. (1984), Enrique Torres Lezama. "1981 - 1982," Polémica. 4 - 5, (1982) 41 - 51. Carlos Figueroa Ibarra, "Guatemala: El contenido burgués y reaccionario del golpe de Estado," ibid. p. 52 - 64. Federico Lopez Alvarado, "Golpe de Estado, contradicciones, sociales y opciones políticas," ibid., p. 71 -77.

[499] Jim Handy, "Resurgent Democracy and the Guatemalan Military," Journal of Latin American Studies. 18, (1986) p. 383 - 408.

[500] Impressions drawn from Latin American Weekly Report and Information Sevices of Latin America.

In order to understand the 1982 military coup it must be remembered that it was a response to an electoral outcome and not against the Lucas García regime, expressing the willingness of Ladino elites to accept the agenda of the existing coalition until July of 1982 as long as its term ended at this time. Thus, had the election results been different. the immediacy of a military coup would not have arisen. The coup was also a bloodless affair, expressing a high degree of officer unity on the necessity of this action. As a rapid response, though, to a set of events, it lacked any clear direction or "ideology" other than to act on a variety of highly contradictory and vague demands from several economic sectors. Due to this underlying character of the coup, the military junta was formed around a retired military figure whose image and reputation would supposedly placate these different interests, rather than a figure from the existing military hierarchy or from a specific political party. Either of the latter tactics would only have augmented suspicions and disputes. Hence, even though the coup leaders were active military figures, the leadership of the junta was handed over to a "neutral" but respected figure, untainted by recent involvement in the political scene. This figure was ex - general and former Christian Democratic candidate, Efraín Ríos Montt. What no one from the officer class had anticipated was the controversy that was to emerge under the leadership of this individual.

Within the first few months of the three - person junta led by Ríos Montt, several of the various elite demands were met. This included an increase in government assistance to the coffee and cotton sectors and a general reduction in the spending commitments undertaken by the previous regime. Thus, the *anillo periférico nacional* and the hydroelectric projects were reviewed and promptly cancelled, leaving only the completion of the Pueblo Viejo project as an immediate priority. In addition, a much publicized prosecution of civilian ministers and administrators from the previous regime took place with a review of the spending practices in different government ministries. Despite these initial measures, a more radical austerity program and deregulation of the economy was not to take place given that the above measures alone contributed to a decline in overall GDP and augmented unemployment. Ostensibly, the previous debt - financed expansion was ended, but the basic state structures created throughout the 1970s remained in place. Although the country's "hard currency" reserves had sunk to extremely low levels, Guatemala's outstanding debt remained low in comparison to other Latin American countries, providing the junta with considerable leeway in addressing its economic difficulties without having immediately to accept more radical measures imposed by international lending agencies. Thus, the main problems for the economy continued to be generated by depressed export markets abroad in which the junta refused to concede to elite demands for a deregulated economy, clearly seeing no correlation between the condition and the elite's cure. The military junta was not willing to abandon its interventionist agenda even though the discourse among numerous economic sectors clearly supported the retreat of the state from within the economy. This military intransigence established the context for a protracted debate throughout the 1980s.

Initially, the aims of the junta appeared quite straightforward: the anulment of the election results; an administrative reorganization of the upper echelons of the regime; and the establishment of a process for a new round of elections. With these stated ends all the political parties supported the military coup and the junta's agenda to "clean up" a variety of government security and administrative bodies which had become a persistent demand of all economic sectors. Ríos Montt, though, was an unpredictable figure who brought to power a assortment of antagonistic qualities that included a general disdain for the existing political parties, the officer class of the military, and the powerful groups in each economic sector, all of whom he blamed for his previous "electoral defeat" and ostracizing after 1974. While considerable speculation had surrounded his fundamentalist Protestant conversion in the late 1970s, it is more evident that the problem with Ríos Montt, which led to his overthrow, was the increased economic uncertainty his dictatorial rule fostered in an already strained economic environment. As a last minute addition to the junta, Ríos Montt lacked a clear understanding of the deeper reasons for the coup other than the charges of electoral fraud and administrative corruption.

The first disconcerting pronouncement for the business sector by Ríos Montt came less than a month after the coup in which he publicly stated that he supported the nationalization of the oil industry, a position that no doubt sent shivers through not only the international petroleum industry but also financial sectors as well.[501] They were then confronted by a figure willing to radically alter an already contentious investment sector. The new administration was forced to act quickly in affirming that not only was the oil industry safe from nationalization, but that the new regime was committed to a "free enterprise" system of business. Despite this rapid rebuttal by the administration, it was evident that Ríos Montt had provoked a "wait and see" approach in various domestic and international investors, unsure of what this new junta represented for the economic future of the country. The deeper cause of political and economic uncertainty came only a short time later when debate emerged around a scheduled return to party elections and Ríos Montt responded that only a few "dirty and disgusting" political figures wanted a quick return to elections, thus initiating the alienation of a broad range of civilian figures that had previously legitimized the junta.[502] The growing demands for a return to an electoral forum signaled the uncertainty and discontent that was beginning to surround Ríos Montt's domination within the junta. Shortly after this controversy, Ríos Montt consolidated his rule by dissolving the junta and postponing all discussion of an election schedule. Although the other two prominent figures in the junta relinquished their roles in the interests of "unity and stability," it was evident that Ríos Montt had opened a breach with the larger class of military officers creating even more political and economic instability.

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[501] Prensa Libre 19 April, 22 April, 23 April 1982.

The Ríos Montt dictatorship, which came into effect in June of 1982, was a highly unstable coalition of civilian forces unified by a vague commitment to institute economic stability and end corruption. Given Guatemala's dependent economic status, though, there was little it could do to affect a change in world prices for the country's main exports. Consequently, the regime oscillated from initially proposing an austerity program to eventually borrowing money to fund a variety of projects, i.e. road building, construction, education, health and social programs. The increase in public spending to confront the problem of rising unemployment had much to do with the fact that Ríos Montt had gone that extra step in alienating domestic investors by repeatedly berating them for tax evasion, maintaining investment monies abroad, and being of questionable moral character (which was certainly true, but no way to attract their confidence). In addition, Ríos Montt attacked the functioning of the CACM, which had always operated to the benefit of Guatemala, by claiming that it was a structure that largely benefited foreign interests over Guatemalan. The CACM was then undermined by Ríos Montt initiating retaliatory tariffs against other Central American nations. With these actions by the dictatorship, the level of private investment and production sank in the manufacturing sector, and urban under- and unemployment rose significantly. With this series of policies the Ríos Montt regime became alienated from the most important Ladino sectors, prompting continuous rumors of an imminent coup being forged by a wide variety of political and economic groups. As Ríos Montt continued to vacillate on establishing a process for elections, attacking and arresting his critics, it was readily apparent that Ríos Montt's days were numbered after only one year in power.

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[502] Prensa Libre 3 June, 6 June 1982.

Although the Reagan administration, and Ronald Reagan personally, had supported the Ríos Montt dictatorship by claiming that it was receiving a "bum rap" by human rights organization, this was not enough recognition to keep Ríos Montt in power. Confronted by a skeptical U.S. Congress and continuous reports by independent observers that the Ríos Montt regime was presiding over a genocidal military campaign in the Maya highlands, the Reagan administration was unable to procure the level of economic aid that would have postponed his demise. Additionally, Ríos Montt's nationalistic rhetoric did little to satisfy both domestic and international investors, and further complicated the Reagan administration's efforts at backing him. By the middle of 1983 the regime was wholly isolated both internally and internationally, and the move by Defense Minister Mejía Víctores to overthrow Ríos Montt and dissolve his administration in August of 1983, was little more than a formality rather than a major political event within the country. Of interest, though, was the patience of the military, which allowed Ríos Montt's administration to introduce a controversial 10% Value Added Tax against hostile elite opinion before the regime was overthrown. The tax, though lowered to 7%, remained in effect after the coup.[503]

Although the fifteen - month tenure of Ríos Montt attracted considerable attention, it was the two and a half year rule of General Mejía Víctores that successfully initiated a gradual return to elections and a civilian administration. By the end of 1982 the so - called "conflict" in the highlands was over due to the forms of repression previously adopted by the Lucas García regime and maintained under the Ríos Montt dictatorship, to which the guerrilla movement had had no adequate response. General Mejía Víctores, like the Ríos Montt regime before him, was largely concerned with the continuing internal repercussions of an adverse external economic environment. What gave his tenure stability was the commitment from the outset to begin the process towards an elected administration. Confronted with continuing depressed conditions regionally and internationally, at an economic level General Mejía Víctores was unable to reverse this process of economic decline, a process that was only exacerbated by the open discontent expressed then by numerous economic sectors towards the military and its administration.

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[503] LAWR 5 August 1983, and United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America, Economic Survey of Latin America 1983. 1985.

General Mejía Víctores, during his two years in office, was again no satisfactory ally of the private sector. While he maintained a degree of legitimacy by presiding over a gradual democratic opening, the economic policies of his coalition led to a final showdown with the private sector, a sector that had become more cohesive after having to contend with the Ríos Montt dictatorship. Initially General Mejía Víctores had signaled his willingness to ally with the U.S. against Nicaragua but when no substantial economic aid accompanied this political gesture he returned to a more neutral and critical position vis - a - vis the U.S., a reversal even the international press could not help but recognize.[504] Confronted with immediate debt repayments, pressure from the International Monetary Fund for government austerity and privatization, and minimal signs of economic recovery in traditional sectors, General Mejía Víctores refused to bend to international and economic pressures and maintained the existing state structure. Where he sought a modicum of relief was by challenging the private sector. The conflict was opened up when the General attempted to reestablish price controls to arrest inflationary pressures that were fueling public discontent, a move that was roundly condemned by the private sector, leading to the regime backing down.[505] Then, in a final gesture, the General attempted to institute a major taxation reform in order to bring in a civilian administration on a sound financial footing. This act triggered a major backlash by the private sector, leading to a hostile debate and the regime retreating when threatened with a "capital strike."[506] When, in 1984-85, the regime had over - promoted the production of corns and beans and was forced to drastically reduce the guaranteed prices, discontent was extended into the agricultural sectors.[507] Forced to default on loan payments and unable to make the private sector submit to the regime's authority, the dictatorial phase ended in economic failure with the military unable to reconstruct a satisfactory mediating role during this economic crisis.

From Lucas García to Mejía Víctores, the military was in continuous conflict with various economic sectors which could not be resolved. General Mejía Víctores' final act of taxation only further confirmed private sector suspicion of the military, and this sector was evidently hostile to any more military - civilian coalition projects, preferring to await the results of an open electoral process. After ten years of dealing with military - dominated administrations it could no longer trust to satisfactorily represent its interests, Guatemala's private sector had become advocates of "democracy." Despite a clear distrust having been established between the military and the private sector, the military, as we will see, remained a dominant political entity for several reasons, the most important being its continued control over the Maya majority in a period of political and economic uncertainty.

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[504] New York Times, 23 November 1983.

[505] United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America, Economic Survey of Latin America 1985. 1986.

[506] Latin American Regional Reports: Mexico and Central America 3 May, 7 June 1985.

[507] United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America, Economic Survey of Latin America 1984. 1985.

The Ladino State and the Maya Highlands

With the massive level of violence directed against the Maya highlands beginning in 1981, the Maya and the Ladino experiences diverged significantly, establishing the bases for two quite dissimilar understandings of this nation's contemporary history, distinct discursive experiences that have held important political implications. Despite the high levels of political violence that had taken place in the capital and surrounding Ladino regions, this violence paled in its intensity and dimensions to that inflicted on the Maya of the FTN. In addition, whereas the Ladino regions were to experience a significant decline in political violence and a gradual political opening in the aftermath of the 1982 military coup, more of the Maya highlands were to be subject to an extreme military terror and entrenchment. What is most striking about this period and series of events, then, is that a consistent Ladino policy of state terror and control proceeded without interruption against an increasingly larger percentage of the Maya population while the exact opposite experience took place among Ladino sectors. Furthermore, once the guerrilla movement had been visibly defeated by 1982, the repressive structures imposed on a large number of Maya communities, i.e. civil patrols, have expanded and persisted up to the present day and despite the election of three different civilian administrations and ongoing peace negotiations with the guerrilla movement since the early 1990s. I contend that in order to understand the reasons and broader implications for this persistent Ladino state policy, continuous reference must be made to the underlying economic and ethnic factors that have dominated Ladino thinking on the Maya and the Maya highlands. These factors, I believe, more clearly reveal why the military remains the dominant political institution in Guatemalan society to this day.

The problem that continues to confront Guatemalan society is the coming to terms with its recent past, a major problem due to the differing experiences and explanations surrounding what happened in the early 1980s, and often reduced to a simple discussion of the military confronting a guerrilla movement that supposedly had the support of the Maya population. What has gone unrecognized in this debate by both internal and external observers, are the economic imperatives underlying the rapid acceleration and persistent military violence in the highlands, imperatives that did not begin to recede until the late 1980s. With the March, 1982, military coup and installation of Ríos Montt, a more fiscally conservative regime ended several of the mega - projects undertaken by the Lucas García regime. Even though public discussion of restructuring and capitalizing on the economic potential of the FTN receded with the coup, the immediate and long - term vision of benefiting from the region's considerable economic potential did not. Despite Ríos Montt's threat of nationalizing the oil industry, a radically new strategy was being proposed shortly after the coup that foresaw increased investment and the rapid development of Guatemala's oil reserves. The highlands remained a critical economic focus for the new regime.

Breaking with the nationalistic rhetoric of the previous regime, the new minister in charge of petroleum exploration, Lt. Colonel Alejandro Contreras, proposed a radical change in attitude offering important incentives to foreign companies for the exploration by reducing the initial costs of concessions, expenditures on infrastructure and the government's share of export sales.[508] The reality was, at the time, that Guatemala more urgently needed to develop its oil fields than the foreign oil companies needed the fields, and hence, a less demanding and more pliable attitude had to be taken to attract the investment the regime wanted for this sector.[509] Part of the reasoning for this reduced nationalistic approach was the fact that oil prices by 1982 were beginning to fall, and numerous international oil companies had reduced their expenditures for exploration. The Guatemalan position had to be altered if it was to attract a large percentage of a shrinking investment pool. With this ongoing discussion about revising exploration and commercial laws surrounding oil, it was believed that Guatemala could receive the necessary exploration investment to be self - sufficient in three of four years. Expectations were that production could be tripled in three years and "new zones" were to be put on offer for tender in addition to re-issuing those zones that had not been previously claimed for exploration. As reported at the time, the Ríos Montt regime was broadcasting a "glowing picture of Guatemala's future as an oil exporter" with the passage of a new oil law, which was "expected to attract a flood of small and medium companies, particularly from the United States."[510] Clearly the conflict in the highlands had not interfered with production and speculation in these areas, a testament to how limited the threat in the highlands had become for the regime.

As debate proceeded under the Ríos Montt regime, optimistic speculation surrounded the oil industry and the more aggressive approach the regime was considering to attract investment.

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[508] Military figures were always in charge of this ministry that regulated existing oil exploration and production and drafted legislation surrounding this sector.

[509] Prensa Libre 23 April, 26 April 1982.

[510] LAWR 27 August 1982.

Export levels on existing fields were increased, new sites were discovered in existing fields, and Texaco and Petrobras accepted a joint contract for expanded exploration in the department of El Petén. Speculation on Guatemala's reserves varied from some three hundred million to upwards of three to four billion barrels, and the minister in charge maintained that self - sufficiency could last well into the next century once achieved.[511] In the fall of 1982, the regime sponsored the conference of the Latin American Organization of Energy (OLADE) as a way to attract new forms of capital investment and expertise on the petroleum question from other petroleum producing countries.[512] From this arose heightened expectations surrounding energy self - sufficiency and the possibilities for multi - lateral financing from various governments and the Inter - American Development Bank. Rumors also concerned the potential of Guatemala going from an agricultural based economy to one enjoying the benefits of the numerous spin - off industries related to the full commercialization of the nation's oil reserves, of which Guatemala was believed to have four primary zones: northern El Petén; the department of Izabal extending into Caribbean waters; off - shore reserves along the southwest Pacific coast; and all across the northern highlands into southwestern El Petén. It was no coincidence that the latter was the region of both confirmed oil reserves and the principal region of attack against the Maya.

Despite the hype and imperative to increase Guatemala's oil exploration and production, the Ríos Montt coalition was evidently divided over the extent of the revisions to attract investment, thus delaying the implementation of a new oil law. By early 1983, though, it was clear that the nationalists had won out in the administration (in all likelihood, led by Ríos Montt himself) as the new law contained a provision for the creation of a state owned oil agency named Petgua, with incredible powers of regulation and supervision over all oil companies.[513] This new agency, which was to be a competing oil company in its own right, would be paid for by fees and levies on private oil companies. Both Texaco and Hispanoil were so infuriated by this proposal that they immediately threatened to pull out of Guatemala, forcing the regime to back off from this strategy. The Ríos Montt regime had done little to inspire confidence by the foreign oil companies and uncertainty continued. With the new oil law proposal of July, 1983, though, the state agency had been substituted for a pared - down oversight committee comprised of the minister of finance, the head of the central bank, and the minister of defense, the latter confirmation that the military's direct interest in the oil industry had not waned but remained front and center on petroleum prospects.[514] In addition, the government proposed the reduction of the state's take from 55% to 30% on commercial sales, a significant reduction in contract costs from some one million dollars to one hundred thousand, and the government only getting a share of oil revenues after the company had recovered its investment costs. What was interesting about this ongoing debate was that the issue of the "guerrilla threat" in the highlands was never raised as a concern, even though the regions of extreme military violence corresponded directly with existing and prospective oil field development. Consequently, neither internally or externally was the connection made between this economic priority of the Ladino state and the brutal terrorization of those populations located within or near this speculation. Hence, there was no fundamental change in the Ladino state's policy towards the Maya of the northern highlands from the Lucas García regime to the Ríos Montt dictatorship.

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[511] Prensa Libre 2 August 1982.

[512] Prensa Libre 14 - 17 October 1982.

[513] LAWR 10 December 1982. LAWR 11 March 1983.

Under Ríos Montt the character of the attack on the Maya was redefined and openly emphasized the extent to which the all Maya were suspect and considered subversive, a sentiment that had been only latent under the Lucas García regime as it had accelerated the attack against the highlands. While the previous strategy under Lucas García had been to demonstrate confidence in the military and the regime by downplaying the guerrilla strength and its links to the Maya population, which had been more than evident in the behavior of the Maya population, the Ríos Montt regime was more willing to propagate a duplicitous set of images. On the one hand it continued to affirm the regime's ability to control the guerrilla problem, thus making it clear that there was no real threat to the regime. On the other hand it played up the extent to which the Maya were considered the "subversive threat" and thus needed to be dealt with through extreme and indiscriminate measures.[515] Publicizing a crude mathematical formula, that behind every guerrilla there were some ten Maya supporters, the Ríos Montt regime eliminated any possibility that the military was killing "innocents." For some critical observers such pronouncements were taken at face value as proof that the Maya of the highlands had become a revolutionary subject, bandying around guerrilla support as from 200,000 to up to 500,000 active Maya supporters.[516] This led to the search for socio - economic explanations as to how the Maya community had gone from political insignificance to supporting a revolutionary agenda to overthrow the military and the regime. By casting the military and the regime in a defensive light, no mention was made of the incredible economic stakes that had arisen and persisted within the thinking of the Ladino state with respect to the highlands. Furthermore, no one recognized the "politics" of this number game surrounding "Maya support" for the guerrillas. One of the underlying motives for the coup had been to repair Guatemala's image internationally and reestablish a more cordial relationship with the United States in an effort to open up the possibilities for increased military and economic aid. By dramatizing the "threat" for the highlands and implicating all Maya communities, the Ríos Montt regime propagated a spurious vision of the highlands that would play on the sentiments of the Reagan administration while deflecting criticism by human rights observers as to the motives and ruthless measures employed by the regime against the Maya. This image was also propagated in the minds of the larger Ladino population, a sector of Guatemalan society that was more than a little prone to envisioning a collective Maya threat.

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[514] LAWR 29 July 1983.

[515] Michael McClintock (1985) p. 258. Phillip Wearne (1989) p. 20.

[516] Susanne Jonas (1991), p. 133. Joel Simon and Beatriz Manz (1992), p. 101. George Black et. al. (1984), p. 104.

One of the real successes of the 1982 coup, then, was its ability to realign the tactics and perceptions of the Ladino state with what had become visibly apparent by late 1981, namely that the Ladino populated areas, and particularly in the capital, the guerrilla movement had no real presence or active support. Thus, the more multi - ethnic terror of the Lucas García regime was replaced with a more discriminating application of terror in which Ladino areas were to quickly enjoy a marked reduction in repression and a political opening while the Maya populated regions of the highlands were subject to the most extreme forms of terror and military control. In this established ethnic matrix, the conflict in the highlands became a more openly publicized affair, in which a whole series of military campaigns, decried as massacres and genocide by the guerrilla movement, were duly reported along with the efforts of the military, the civilian bureaucracy, foreign aid organizations, and international agencies to rebuild after the massive destruction had taken place.[517] In addition, this was more than just a military involvement in the broader implementation of the civil patrol system across the highlands, as Ladinos from different regions, right - wing political parties and "mobilized reserves" moved into the highlands to oversee the enforcement of this repressive system of military control over the Maya. It is because of this type of ethnic alignment and sentiment that the most common understanding of the conflict in the early 1980s is that it was a "civil war," an explanation, as we see, that severely distorts what really happened and diminishes what a large percentage of the Maya experienced. Not incidentally, it completely conceals the economic motives of the Ladino state that were never that far from the surface in formulating its assault on the Maya.

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[517] Michael McClintock, p. 240 - 259, and Tom Barry, Guatemala: The Politics of Counterinsurgency. (Albuquerque: Inter - Hemispheric Education Resource Center, 1986) p. 41.

In the Fall of 1983, shortly after the removal of Ríos Montt and at a time when over 300,000 Maya males had been forced into the civil patrol system on pain of death, the regime of General Mejía Víctores approved the new oil laws intended to attract further investment and increase existing levels of production.[518] By this time, neither an interest in exploration in Guatemala or levels of commercial production had met the expectations of previous regimes, and the Getty Oil Co. and Amoco had decided to terminate prospecting when the rapid discovery of large commercial fields did not take place. ELF Aquitane was reviewing its position in light of the new oil laws, but the high costs of drilling in remote and inaccessible areas, plus the fact that the geological conditions considerably lengthened the whole drilling process, was making Guatemala far less attractive relative to other countries. Nevertheless, Mexico's huge success just across the border continued to fuel enthusiasm that there was a similar field in the northern highlands. Hence, the new laws adopted by the Víctores regime included not just financial incentives, but a major expansion in the lands to be conceded for exploration. This included not only a re-auctioning of the northern regions of in the departments of Huehuetenango and El Quiché, but also territory extending across central El Quiché and Alta Verapaz and all along the eastern border of El Petén.[519] What was astonishing about this land offer was that this was supposed to be the principal regions from which the Maya - guerrilla threat emanated, and corresponded directly to the worst massacres and community destruction in 1982 and throughout 1983.[520] Again, the rhetoric did not match the ongoing machinations of the regime as it ruthlessly attacked the Maya population of these regions supposedly due to the "guerrilla threat," while maintaining an international pitch to foreign oil companies to take up exploration in these very same regions.

In a consistent pattern, then, from early 1981 to late 1983, the regions that experienced the most vicious killings and displacement of populations were also continuously viewed by the Ladino state with an important economic interest despite quite dramatic changes in administrations at the national level. Nothing about this sequence of events suggests that the Ladino state was ever threatened by a revolution or dramatic social change originating from the highlands. This is not to say that the military was not concerned with the guerrilla presence, only that the type of military actions utilized in the Maya highlands were precipitated not by security concerns but by broader interests in restructuring and developing the potential wealth of the north. To this end the simple presence of the guerrillas and a long despised and suspect population was enough to render the Maya as a perceived impediment to this larger project, and any distinctions between the two were collapsed. As a consequence, the continued entrenchment of the civil patrol system upon the Maya, as with the preoccupation with highland wealth, was to persist uninterrupted as a Ladino state policy over four administrations, including that of an elected civilian president and Congress. This consistency represents more than a strict military policy since the process became increasingly civilianized and persisted across a significant turnover of personnel in the civilian and military hierarchy. It became, then, the new bases on which Ladinos generally, and the Ladino state in particular, related or mediated their relationship with the Maya majority. This arose out of the two quite different experiences of each ethnic group and the accepted interpretation of what had occurred in the early 1980s.

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[518] Journal of Commerce 24 October 1983, Financial Times 16 November 1983, and LAWR 2 December 1983.

[519] Financial Times 16 November 1983. Initial plans for this expanded land offering can be traced back to late 1981 when a more systematic assault on the northern highlands took place. See LAWR 8 January 1982.

[520] See map detailing principal areas of military actions against the Maya population in Appendix Six. See also maps in CEIDEC, Guatemala: Polos de Desarrollo. (Mexico: Editorial Praxis, 1988) p. 359 - 363, and Phillip Wearne (1989), p. 19.

The Discourse of Domination

The key to understanding the military's continued dominance in Guatemalan society lies in how these differences in experiences manifested themselves ideologically and politically , or in other words, what became the dominant (thus Ladino) interpretation of events in the early 1980s. This interpretation, as mentioned previously, was (and is) based on the fact that the Ladino experience is quite different from that of large numbers of Maya but became the dominant explanation, namely that the Maya had thrown their collective support behind the revolutionary armed struggle. Whether on the political left, right or center, this became the general understanding for the state violence, a violence that was, in its application, discriminatory, having been based on ethnic and economic considerations as we have seen. Consequently, the Ladino population experienced first a heightened application of selective state violence and terror under the Lucas García regime, then a marked decline in state violence under the Ríos Montt dictatorship. General Mejía Víctores, upon overthrowing Ríos Montt, immediately put into effect a process of national elections and opened a space for the recomposition and organization of Ladino civilian political parties. While this process was noted for a certain upsurge in selective violence against certain Ladino sectors, notably the university, it was also a two - and - a - half - year period in which a more open context of political activity clearly led to civilian rule by 1986.[521] This began with the election of a National Assembly on July 1, 1984, to create a new constitution and timetable for elections, followed by an open competition for a constituent assembly and for the presidency. For various Ladino sectors, then, the worst phase of the violence had occurred under the Lucas García regime and other than Ríos Montt's intransigence on an election timetable, the post - 1981 period had been marked by signs of a progressive movement towards civilian rule. The result was that with the opening of the political sphere there was no cohesive alignment between pro- and anti- military civilian forces. In fact, there was no unity at all with respect to the issue of the military's ongoing role in society. Rather, some nineteen different political parties had acquired the necessary 40,000 signatures to qualify as an official party, representing different hues of the left, right and center of the Ladino political spectrum. In short, the military faced no effective opposition from within the Ladino political sphere at all.

After the formation of the national assembly, fourteen Ladino - dominated parties remained to compete in the constituent elections of 1985 and eight figures were put forward as presidential candidates. Such a political configuration, that was only further defamed by an election discourse that eschewed discussion of issues for personalistic attacks, revealed the immediate return of a fragmented political sphere wholly antagonistic to any broader unity. Given this political alignment and environment, there was no division or an opposition between the military and the Ladino political parties. With no substantive position from the Ladino parties vis - a - vis the military, the latter was assured of an overt presence without critical examination of the recent past or the military's continuing role in society. While such vacuity may be attributed to the restrictive conditions that surrounded an election process under a military dictatorship, it fails to explain why in two subsequent elections i.e. 1990 and 1995, the fragmentation had not only increased but the electoral discourse remained unreflective and largely uncritical of the military's dominant presence in society. The political sphere at the national level has not come to terms with its recent past, particularly the treatment of the Maya population, and this can be partially explained by the reigning consensus among Ladino sectors that the Maya population had supported the guerrillas, bringing the wrath of the military upon them. The increased civilianization of the Ladino state after 1986 was accompanied by a specific understanding of the past that was to leave intact a set of Ladino state structures, i.e. forced recruitment, civil patrols, intense surveillance, which the larger Ladino populace held no compulsion to remove. Given the implications of this interpretation of the past, then, it was not surprising that Guatemala's process of democratization was to be viewed by external observers as a resounding failure despite the electoral victory in 1985-86 of the reformist Christian Democratic Party in assembly seats, and of Vinicio Cerezo as the president.

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[521] On this period and a critical assessment of the Cerezo and Serrano administrations, see Robert Trudeau, Guatemalan Politics: The Struggle For Democracy. (Boulder: Lynn Rienner, 1993).

With the Christian Democratic victory, from without it appeared as if a new course had been established as the election of this reformist Ladino party suggested at least a continued political opening and the possibility of a sustained improvement in human rights, concerns the party had always championed. Critical foreign observers initially understood the victory of the Christian Democratic party as establishing an important tension between the reformist position of this party and a supposedly "right - wing" military of which the former had international support and respectability.[522] This division or tension was more of appearance than substance given the thinking of the military and the Christian Democratic party. The CD's intention to introduce tax reform, maintain existing levels of government spending, and refusal of a program of radical austerity and privatization as demanded by the private sector, in no way departed from the agenda of former military dominated administrations. In fact, the election of a civilian administration gave the Ladino state a renewed credibility and maneuverability with the nation's financial problems, notably the ability to renegotiate outstanding debts and the acquisition of new loans and aid. Hence, the military's economic policies had been "civilianized," the CD being no more radical in economic policy than its predecessors. What made the context on these issues more volatile was that the collective weight of the private sector, i.e. CACIF, which was more willing to challenge the policies of a civilian administration than that of a military dominated administration.[523] Under an elected administration the private sector posed more of a threat to economic stability than previously, marking the apparent ineffectiveness of civilian administrations in instituting any significant reforms since 1986, simply defending a whole range of state services and regulations created during the military - dominated regimes of the 1970s. The election of a civilian administration also created the context for more vocal activity by a number of Ladino unions, representing either the public or private sector, renewing demands for more wage increases, continued subsidization of services i.e. electricity, bus fares, against pressures for privatization and austerity. There was even a renewed call for land reform emanating from the Ladino southwest. Thus, on economic policy, civilian governments since 1986 have demonstrated a marked ineffectiveness given the manner in which Ladino groups have aligned themselves with respect to the old state - interventionist project that was expanded in the 1970s. What was most apparent, though, was what little effect all of this national change had on the countryside, notably in the Maya highlands, where military - imposed structures were maintained and even expanded during the first years of the Vinicio Cerezo administration.

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[522] This impression drawn from reports in Information Services of Latin America.

[523] Chamber of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial, and Financial Associations (CACIF)

Despite ongoing speculation that billions of barrels of oil lay within the concessions of the north, the new oil laws could not rekindle the type of international interest that had existed only ten years earlier. With the declining world price for oil, the high costs of Guatemalan exploration, and a perception of "bureaucratic intransigence" on the part of various regimes, the largest investor, ELF Aquitane, decided to leave in 1984.[524] This decision dropped national oil production down to 2000 barrels per day from a high of 9000 only two years prior. By early 1985, the second largest investor, Texaco, had decided to finish its present drilling program and pull out. Although there was to be a brief revival of drilling exploration by Amoco and Exxon in 1986 near the Mexican border in El Petén, a dispute with the new civilian government and the military with these companies led to a termination of exploration activity. The Cerezo administration made an appeal to the Mexican government for assistance in oil exploration and development of this industry, but appears to have come to naught.[525] As of 1987-88, then, only a couple of small producing wells remained with no international excitement concerning oil in northern Guatemala.[526] Word had gone out that there just were no valuable oil fields in the north as had previously been assumed, even though a few wildcatters tried to keep the dream alive. With this outcome, what had been the mainstay of the military's economic project in the highlands had ended, and Guatemala returned to being but an exporter of agricultural goods, a condition it had so violently attempted to break from.

Up until the late 1980s, then, the civilian administration of Vinicio Cerezo had retained a vested interest in preserving the "social peace" forcefully imposed by the military across the northern Maya highlands. It should come as no surprise that the Cerezo government made no alterations in the way the Ladino state or the military related to the Maya of the highlands, and endorsed the continuation of the civil patrol system imposed on the Maya. The only contribution of the Christian Democrats in this period was an attempt to lessen the more onerous duties required of the civil patrollers, duties that had often made it extremely difficult for the Maya to expend time acquiring the necessities of life. Thus, the civil administration only sought a more flexible application of absolute control in the highlands, not a comprehensive restructuring or disbanding of the system. In common with previous administrations, the Cerezo government lent this system the same ideological justification that had been espoused under Ríos Montt and Mejía Víctores, entrenching, rather than contesting, the belief that the Maya were a suspect populace due to their past association with the guerrilla organizations. This "truth" took on even more weight when such respected figures as René de León Schlotter, renowned for his position on human rights, became the civilian figure overseeing the civil patrol system via his ministerial portfolio as Minister of Urban and Rural Development. Schlotter saw his primary task through this department as combating "subversive ideology," thus wholly supporting the military system of control and perpetuating the notion of the Maya as an actively subversive entity.[527] Consequently, the first legitimately elected administration in several years represented no significant contrast with previous interpretations or actions towards the Maya. And again, this Ladino state behavior barely concealed a set of economic incentives for this continued repression. Out of this extended period, though, had arisen the conviction or "standard interpretation" in most Ladino circles that the Maya had been, and continued to some degree to be, a suspicious entity whose prior alliance with the guerrillas had brought about a "civil war." The failure of the Christian Democratic administration to offer any type of refutation of this interpretation or to contest the military's version of what had occurred or was ongoing, solidified a wholly mistaken version of events which, I would argue, continues to have grave consequences for the Maya majority.

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[524] Wall Street Journal 10 June 1984. LAWR 17 August 1984. Latin American Regional Reports Mexico and Central America 20 September 1985.
[525] Journal of Commerce 24 December 1985.
[526] Financial Times 25 February 1987.

The Continuing Political Dimensions of the Ladino - Maya Distinction In Guatemala

It is perhaps one of the greater ironies of this period that the Guatemalan military and critical left observers share an almost identical account of events from 1980 to 1985, for different reasons but with a similar outcome. What has resulted is a severe limitation to appreciating what a large number of Maya experienced and continue to endure. The widely held belief that the Maya revolted as a collective mass, supporting a revolutionary agenda to overthrow the military, is as much a justification for the brutal tactics of the military as it is a vindication of a certain theoretical tenet that the poor are a revolutionary subject.[528] Clearly if the grand development plans of the Lucas García regime had proceeded in full, or the oil speculation had come to fruition, we would not be talking about a peasant or Maya rebellion, but the destruction and restructuring of the rural countryside by foreign multi - nationals and banks for profits and wealth, e.g. the recent case of the Ogoni people in Nigeria. In light of the complete failure of this larger project due to a combination of economic circumstances, there is little overt evidence that is testament to more tangible concerns underlying the ferocity of the Ladino state attack on the Maya peoples. Instead, we are left with the incomplete testimonies of the Maya peoples themselves that attests to a violent and unprovoked attack, but whose voice is rarely heard except by a select group of interested persons against the dominant version shared by the Guatemalan military, the larger Ladino state and populous, and critical left observers within and outside of Guatemala.

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[527] See Tom Barry (1986), p. 89 - 91.

[528] Such views may be seen in press reports throughout the 1980s, and in scholarly works i.e. Susanne Jonas (1991) and George Black et. al. (1984).

Given the evidence presented here, it is no wonder the Guatemalan military holds so strongly to a version of events that portrays this institution in a defensive light. As much as the fragmentation in other Ladino sectors of the electoral arena leaves it in a dominant position, the commonly held belief of a revolutionary Maya subject shields this institution from more heinous charges while serving to justify and confirm its long - held role of protector of the Ladino populace against the suspect and untrustworthy Maya hordes. Though difficult to confirm, it is not hard to imagine that a sense of cultural insecurity underlies the present unwillingness of every Ladino administration since 1986 to commit to disbanding the civil patrol system of the Maya highlands and initiating an honest rapprochement with this sector of society. To the extent, though, that this continues to be the dominant interpretation of the recent past in Guatemala, the military will continue to fulfill its historically important cultural - political role ensuring that the Maya remain a terrified and subordinate majority under a more open system of elected representation. In addition, the acceptance by the larger Ladino population of this version of events will continue to stifle any possibility of a real retreat being imposed on the military and the impunity that it enjoys. Clearly the larger Ladino population requires a more compassionate and self - critical examination of its relationship with the Maya majority if it is to counter the military presence in society. At this point, though, there have only been a few examples of this desire expressed. To this end, the Maya majority also requires a better and more accurate understanding of what it endured and why the violence occurred in the manner that it did. By contesting the military on the economic motives that underlay such a massive assault, the Maya may more firmly organize against the military presence, dispelling larger fears that they represent a recently hostile and suspicious collective. Nevertheless, this is easier said than done when the numerous Maya experiences in this period are taken into account.

Although the Maya lay in the imagination of the dominant Ladino culture as a unified and threatening entity that rose against the established order, it is important to observe that there was not a singular Maya experience from this time period. While the Maya prior to the attack of 1980-81 were equally discriminated against, there were to be several Maya experiences due to the very nature of the attack, which focused not on the Maya generally, but on those communities placed within or approximate to the Franja Transversal del Norte and eastern El Petén. Only later, as a more generalized anti - Maya approach was introduced in the form of the civil patrol system, was a larger percentage of the Maya population brought under the military's direct control. The civil patrol system went from 30,000 Maya males at the time of the 1982 military coup, to close to 1,000,000 by 1986, declining to some 500,000 at the present time. In itself, this system did not represent the most brutal aspect of the military's assault, becoming only a long standing testament of how Ladinos generally view the Maya population as but a people to be controlled, monitored and dominated. The real horror lay in the experiences of those communities that were completely erased and their populations either killed or dispersed. Since this was for the military an issue of territorial control, versus population control, it remains an experience that is quite separate for several Maya linguistic groups compared to those that either experienced solely the imposition of the civil patrol system and to those that experienced neither a direct or indirect military attack. Again, this distinction is based on territory prized by the state, and not the placement of the Maya in relation to the guerrilla forces or their past economic and political activity i.e. cooperative movement, CUC. The Maya experiences in this period, then, exist on a continuum from those communities that only experienced a heightened military presence in their areas to those that felt the full terror possible from this institution, fostering later a confusing and vague understanding of what the Maya themselves believed to be the reasoning for the different military actions.[529]

For the Maya communities located within or next to the FTN, the military assault and aftermath persisted as a nightmare, some communities and areas being subject to repeated military attacks before being organized into civil patrols which then brought a reduced degree of direct violence. It is perhaps this experience that has most perplexed observers as it became obvious by the late 1980s that many survivors in this military system attributed this latter phase of community "security" to the personal efforts of Ríos Montt, and became staunch supporters of Montt's later efforts to become president via elections. Such sentiments, if anything, were further testament to the unorganized and non - political character of these communities as they were confronted by an unanticipated military attack. In reality, Ríos Montt was simply the unintended beneficiary of political support from the earlier state policy of imposing civil patrols, a system he had not devised and only oversaw the implementation of by happenstance. The continuing support of this sector of the Maya for a figure such as Ríos Montt only confirms the larger problem of the Maya understanding what befell them. This has, perhaps, been the most perverse fallout from this violent affair. While the civil patrol system has moved through various stages of "voluntary association" as decreed by different civilian administrations, it is evident that some communities retain, rather than contest, this military - imposed structure as a mechanism to prevent the past from repeating itself. To the extent, then, that the Maya continue to lack any real sense of security versus the military or the larger Ladino state, they will continue to be manipulated and vilified by the dominant interpretation of the recent past.

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[529] Vague and contradictory accounts can be found in testimonies in such works as Michael McClintock (1985), Beatriz Manz (1988), Joel Simon and Beatriz Manz (1992), David Stoll (1993), Ricardo Falla (1994), CEIDEC, Guatemala: Polos de Desarollo (Vol. II). (Mexico: Editorial Praxis, 1990); David Stoll, "Guatemala: Why They Like Rios Montt," in NACLA Report On the Americas. 24, 4 (1990 / 1991) p. 4 - 7; Carol Smith, "Maya Nationalism," NACLA Report On the Americas. 25, 3 (1991) p. 29 - 33.

It must be recognized, though, that the military's attack across the highlands did not go as smoothly as intended. In the aftermath of this event the military was left with tens of thousands of people who had resisted submission to the military by either crossing the border into Mexico or simply moving into the dense forests and jungles of the north. With this massive emigration the Guatemalan military got what it least desired, notably international attention and scrutiny for what it had forced the Maya peoples to endure. It is because of this "internationalization" of the Guatemalan context by virtue of what had occurred and continued to be inflicted upon certain Maya sectors that signs of the military being compelled to alter its behavior have started to become apparent. It is surely true, as well, that the military never expected the larger international community to become that concerned with its "Indians."

As more independent Maya organizations and associations began to appear in the early 1990s contesting the civil patrol system and forced recruitment practices of the military, and inserting demands within the endless rounds of peace negotiations between the Ladino state and the guerrillas, they were left as well with only a vague understanding of why the violence had been so extreme.[530] Again, the lack of tangible evidence representative of a larger economic development project has left them with only references to the guerrilla presence and a certain Maya upsurge in political activity as an explanation, thus drawing on certain aspects of the dominant Ladino interpretation as a source of insight. Added to this problem is the fact that all national discourse on the Franja Transversal del Norte and the "potential wealth of the the northern highlands" has totally disappeared, replaced by debates on structural adjustment programs, privatization, and "free market" solutions to the nation's problems. Gone are the allusions to energy self - sufficiency, incredible export wealth, Middle East oil afluence and the FTN as a solution to the nation's economic problems. With the dominant interpretation, though, Maya groups continue to be confronted with dispelling impressions of themselves as "subversive." Clearly there is considerable evidence to suggest that this characterization is an inaccurate account of why they experienced the brutal Ladino attack that they did.

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[530] See Antonio Otzoy, "The Struggle for Maya Unity," NACLA Report On the Americas. 29, 5 (March / April 1996) p. 33 - 35.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted an alternative explanation of the determinants underlying the extreme violence experienced by the Maya of the northern highlands of Guatemala. While it is certainly true that there is some evidence of a degree of political activism by the Maya prior to the attack and a guerrilla presence, the actual placement of the most extreme violence in the Maya highlands was congruent with an economic agenda the Ladino state had developed and desired the implementation of across the northern highlands. As we have seen, there were high expectations that this development agenda would alter the very bases of the national economy, a vision that gradually faded only by the late 1980s, leaving Guatemala reliant on its agricultural export sector and a weak industrial base. The discourse that accompanied this vision was loaded with impressions of an imminent transformation, economic prosperity, and references to energy self - sufficiency, but a discourse that never made reference to the Maya or their place in this vision. As the monetary stakes rapidly increased, so too did the perception of the Maya as an obstacle to this larger national project. It was this developmental vision directed at the Maya highlands, within the context of an existing racist discourse on the Maya, that fostered such a precarious status for the Maya generally, and specific Maya populations of the north in particular. This, then, was not a revolutionary context, but a military assault on the highlands in which the Maya had become an expendable entity wherever they "complicated" the economic agenda of the Ladino state.

With the evidence concerning the Ladino state's activities and plans for the Maya highlands it is possible to deconstruct the standard revolutionary interpretation of this period. Though often discussed in reference to the revolutionary experiences in the neighboring countries of Nicaragua and El Salvador, with the exception of the death toll, Guatemala does not share the same characteristics when the economic indicators for the period are compared across the isthmus. The image of the military moving into the Maya highlands in response to a unified guerrilla - Maya revolutionary presence is far from accurate. Rather, the Ladino state was very active within the Maya highlands at several different economic levels prior to and during the conflict with the guerrillas, a level of activity that increased dramatically throughout the late 1970s and into the early 1980s, reaching an apex just as the brutal military assault got underway. As I have attempted to demonstrate, the trajectory of this brutal assault was not directed at the bases of the guerrilla presence but across those regions, or the zone, that held the greatest prospects of economic wealth for an array of Ladino and foreign interests. As the conflict progressed, clearly the military retained the upper hand leading to the military instituting not a defensive strategy to control a guerrilla upsurge, but one intended to eradicate all signs of an impediment to that economic agenda proceeding into the future. Neither the activities of the guerrillas or political dynamics of the Maya in the highlands alone, had required such an indiscriminate and vicious attack. This level of cruelty flowed from the ethnic and economic considerations pervading the Ladino state in which the effects upon tens of thousands of Maya peoples were no longer a concern, in contrast to the economic vision at stake. The fact that this official Maya policy persisted over four administrations attests to the primacy of certain economic interests in the highlands and the broader Ladino interpretation of events that emerged over this period. There arose an accepted set of repressive structures to deal with the "Maya problem," measures whose long - term effects on the Maya peoples and Guatemalan politics remains to be more fully explored. Clearly, though, these repressive measures, the dominant interpretation of recent events, and the strong military presence continue to render Guatemala's "democracy" a resounding failure.

While having demythologized the supposed revolutionary qualities of the period, the questions of political instability and military coups were not left unexamined. Throughout the 1970s the military was at the forefront of a specific civilian coalition that progressively became less representative of several private sector interests, interests that gradually became more unified and critical of the agenda of the prevailing civilian - military coalition in light of deteriorating economic conditions imposed by regional and international circumstances. In tracing the roots of this elite discontent and the political implications of the widening division, it became more apparent why the usual references to a military - oligarchic elite - U.S. alliance are insufficient in grasping the dynamics that gradually resulted in a more open electoral forum and civilian administration in 1985-86. The failure of the Ríos Montt and Mejía Víctores regimes to recreate, or refashion, a satisfactory relationship between the structures of government and the private sector perpetuated the political and economic instability put in motion by the election results of 1982. To a high degree, then, the Ladino political space "opened up" because the military could not resolve the contradictory demands of the private sector and foreign interests, i.e. international lending institutions, or in any way alter the broader economic conditions that negatively affected Guatemala. While definitely not a heroic account of popular class struggles for democracy, participation, and respect for human rights, it nevertheless lends more insight into why there has not been much content to Guatemalan "democracy" over the last ten years. In addition, the severely flawed democratic opening cannot be separated from the experiences of the Maya majority and how they have come to be understood in recent history.

Though perhaps the more insufficiently supported aspect of my analysis of Ladino - Maya relations during the 1980s, the evidence suggests that an important and deep separation between the Maya and the Ladino experiences was initiated with the brutality of the military assault in early 1981. In itself this would not have been a problem for the national conscience, and for the Maya in particular, had Ladino and Maya sectors come together in denouncing this series of military atrocities and the military's presence generally. In light of nothing remotely close to such a response, and with a certain degree of Ladino unanimity on the Maya as a subversive element instead, what became entrenched was an understanding of the Maya and their experience that largely absolved the Ladino state and the military for its past and ongoing behavior. Most importantly, this understanding wholly concealed the magnitude of the economic agenda proposed and acted upon by the Ladino state either prior to or during the vicious military attack on the Maya. It would at one level appear that the heightened and inflammatory rhetoric of the Ríos Montt dictatorship, which singled out the Maya peoples as subversive, is what promoted the larger intellectual inquiry into the roots of what I contend was a spurious "Maya radicalization" propagated by the military. Certainly the economic agenda of the Ríos Montt and Mejía Víctores regimes in relation to the oil industry, the vision of imminent energy self - sufficiency, and the performance of the economy generally, belies the impression of the highlands as a bulwark of revolutionary activity against these regimes. The persistence of this impression, though, under the Mejía Víctores regime and then the elected Christian Democratic administration, cannot be understated. It became an established truth that has complicated all efforts by the Maya to contest the ongoing military presence and civil patrols, or to organize independently without fear of repression. The continuing inability of the Maya to investigate, document and publicize their community experiences is as much an expression of the extreme disparities in political power between the Maya and the Ladinos as it is an expression of the fact that the Guatemalan military (and broader sectors of society) have a considerable amount to hide in their motives for killing, terrorizing and displacing so many Maya peoples. Clearly the Maya and the Ladinos have a long way to go before there can be talk of a common national experience, and to this end both sides must contest and counter the military's historical role in this society.

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to address a number of issues concerning our past and contemporary understanding of Guatemalan society. Perhaps the most important aspect of this project has been to document an established separation between what it means to be Ladino and what it means to be Maya in Guatemala. This separation has had numerous dimensions whose significance can only be grasped by examining the relationship of the two ethnic groups over time, or in other words, from a historical perspective. In this manner the antagonistic characteristics and inequalities that stem from this specific ethnic relationship were revealed; over time the military came to play a critical role in assuring the dominance and security of the Ladino population over the Maya majority. By accepting that this ethnic dynamic has had and continues to have an important place in the construction of politics in Guatemala, an alternative understanding of the past was put forward that provides several insights into the most recent phase of political violence and the contemporary political scene.

In the first chapter a critical overview of the various intellectual frameworks and discussions was put forward, outlining how a continuous denial of the significance of the Maya - Ladino distinction in Guatemalan society resulted in a scholarly division and debate over what had occurred in Guatemala during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. In the second chapter the economic bases of the Maya - Ladino distinction were examined with reference to the emergence of Guatemala as a coffee exporting country and the formation of a Ladino ideology which denigrated "all things Maya," an ideology that persisted unabated through the revolutionary period of 1944-54. In the third and fourth chapters the political and economic dynamics within Ladino sectors were reexamined, demonstrating that a middle - class nationalist development project persisted after the 1954 U.S. intervention in which the military played a pivotal role in promoting the modernization of Guatemala. Furthermore, the complex regional and economic dynamics at play in Guatemala were emphasized, revealing important limitations to broad - based radical change in this nation. In the fifth chapter the bases for the later assault on the Maya were established by documenting how the Ladino state began to view the Maya highlands as an important economic zone with the potential to rectify long - standing socio - economic problems across the Ladino south. In the sixth chapter it was demonstrated how the confluence of Ladino racism, a vast vision of economic transformation in the highlands, and the increasing monetary stakes, led to the brutal assault on the northern highlands in the early 1980s. From this attack on the Maya were extrapolated some of the repercussions for the political order as a result of the dominant interpretation that arose to explain the event.

Although it may appear that with this extended historical analysis the class - dependency perspective has borne the brunt of this critique and reexamination of Guatemalan society, I must stress the importance of this perspective in making an understanding of Guatemalan society at all possible. I have not denied that Guatemala was and remains a dependent social formation as has been readily apparent in its economic relationship to the international order. Where I have contested the class - dependency perspective is on the assumption that the politics of Guatemala have been determined by a coterie of external forces, operating through a harmonious alliance with oligarchs and military figures within the nation. Evidently there has been a much more complex interplay of economic and political forces within Guatemala in which ethnicity, nationalism, racism, regionalism, and government policies have generated considerable conflict that cannot be so easily overlooked or reduced to a couple of antagonistic classes and the imperialistic role of the United States. There simply have been too many changes in this society for these issues to be overlooked or subsumed under other categories or forms of explanation.

What has perhaps been most apparent by their absence in this analysis, and maybe surprising given my position as a political scientist examining a Central American country, are the limited references to the United States and its traditional imperialistic role in Guatemala, an aspect that has been the mainstay of the class - dependency perspective. I have attempted to highlight how a peculiar Ladino nationalism complicated what was most often understood as an amicable relationship between the U.S. and the Guatemalan elite and military, and in doing so was more able to document the salience of the Ladino - Maya division in this society and the confluence of political and economic forces that led to such a massive assault on the Maya highlands. A more detailed analysis of the Guatemala - U.S. relationship would not have revealed the motives underlying this assault, as suggested by the existing body of research which has not been able to demonstrate that the U.S. played a role in reversing the fortunes of the guerrilla movement in Guatemala during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Rather, over this period of time U.S. military and economic assistance was at an all - time low, if not non - existent during the years of the worst violence, and, I would add, it is further confirmation of the negligible guerrilla threat from the Maya highlands. There is little doubt that if the U.S. had been faced with the prospect of a guerrilla victory in Guatemala, every effort would have been extended to the various regimes in this time period to prevent such an outcome. This is in no way, then, a vindication of the U.S. for its rhetorical concern with human rights, for at an economic level, as observed, there was considerably more it could have done had it been truly concerned with human rights or the fate of the Maya majority. Evidently, U.S. administrations had a fairly accurate assessment of this conflict, and in all likelihood, an understanding of the economic dimensions underlying the attack on the highlands. Despite this speculation and the role of a few important U.S. multi-nationals in the highlands, it was ultimately a decision within the highest echelons of the Ladino state that resulted in the indiscriminate character of the attack on the Maya, a Ladino state that had as much to benefit from this highland economic potential as the particular foreign companies involved.

What poses several interesting theoretical problematics for critical observers of Guatemalan politics is the documentation of a nationalist - developmentalist economic and political class after 1954, in which the military was an important component. Such a coalition of forces has confounded the traditional left - right political analysis that has dominated discussions of Guatemala, as it represented a mix of "right - wing" politics with a "statist left - nationalistic" economics. As I have attempted to demonstrate, the perception of a "right - wing" political form to these coalitions stems more from the racist character of Guatemalan society, and not from the "free market" economic policies or oligarchic forces that are generally assumed to be in place. Consequently, after 1954 there remained in place a political coalition intent on developing or "modernizing" Guatemala which gradually forced out the monopolistic U.S. interests in the country, asserted state control over key sectors of the economy, altered the economic conditions in several regions of the country, intervened in the economy to support and protect producers / consumers at a number of levels, and expanded different types of state infrastructure, i.e. roads, electricity, water, irrigation, coops, state services. Such efforts, though pursued somewhat erratically across the national territory, demonstrated an overall commitment to a developmentalist ideal, however flawed in its application and its outcome. In order to understand the regional socio - economic changes that have taken place, it is necessary to recognize the coalition of forces that remained in place after the 1954 U.S. intervention, and the relationship of this coalition to the military. As I have stressed in this thesis, the forces that comprised this civilian - military coalition represented some of the most educated and aggressive advocates for a significant national transformation. They were also, though, as racist as the former oligarchic rulers when it came to addressing the Maya peoples, and were adamantly opposed to radical solutions to socio - economic problems. The presence of the military, as noted, was important in effecting significant change without altering the basic ethnic and class structure of Guatemala.

The Guatemalan military has been recognized in the scholarship as a formidable institution responsible for perpetuating fear and terror. While not contesting this history of violence, I have attempted to explicate the complex and contradictory role this institution has played within class and ethnic dynamics. As was documented in some detail, our past understanding of how the military has related to a variety of Ladino and foreign private sector interests has not been accurate. The military, since 1944, has consistently been the defender of a nationalist and statist development agenda that by the 1970s had brought it into conflict with a number of different economic interests. The conflict between a military - civilian coalition and an increasing number of private sector interests fostered the 1982 and 1983 military coups, and the return to an electoral forum. More importantly, it is evident that the military has played a central role within the ethno - political dynamics of Guatemala, being on the one hand the institution that undermines the possibility of an effective democratic process while on the other hand providing a variety of Ladino sectors with an important level of economic, cultural and political security against a perceived continual threat posed by the presence of the Maya majority. It is this irreconcilable tension between a desire for more democracy by certain Ladino sectors and an accepted paternalism involving state - military control of the Maya majority, that partially accounts for the more violent character of Guatemalan politics. As argued, this has fostered and continues to foster a dominant role for the military. Consequently, the Guatemalan military is involved in a much more complex array of social dynamics than previously recognized, which stems from the fact that there is an indigenous majority. To the extent that the military remains the principal means by which the Ladino population communicates with and relates to the Maya, little significant political or economic change can be anticipated.

As for the Maya peoples, I have made every effort to highlight the complexity and variety of Maya life within these larger ethno - political dynamics without reducing these peoples to a singular socio - economic or political experience. Given the collective anthropological research over the last sixty years, it is evident that there have been many economic and political dynamics at the community and regional level that our broader perspectives and generalizations on Guatemalan political economy have not recognized or adequately assessed in drawing parallels between Guatemalan society and other Central American and Latin American countries. Most importantly, I have refrained from reducing the Maya peoples to an extension of a broader, more generic, class structure or peasant society analysis simply because their presence in this society has not been understood as a part of the lower or popular classes, or as a rural peasantry. They are recognized as Maya or Indian, and with this has persisted an intellectual, cultural and political tradition that denigrates and despises them in such terms. I believe, then, that the appeal to other more general perspectives, whether considering the Maya as peasants, seasonal laborers, petty commodity producers or popular classes, fails to capture what it means to be Maya in Guatemala and how the Maya have related historically to a varied set of Ladino political and economic practices and institutions. In this respect the Maya experience in Guatemala has its own unique characteristics that differentiate it from Maya or indigenous experiences in other countries, an experiential difference that was magnified by events of the recent past. This is not to say, though, that important insights for other nations with indigenous minorities or majorities cannot be drawn from the character of Maya - Ladino relations in Guatemala, only that certain qualities and experiences of the Maya in Guatemala require qualification when making comparisons across borders due to national political and economic variations. This latter point has to do, most recently, with the motives and visions forged by the Ladino state towards the territory inhabited by a large number of Maya. The very nature of the Ladino state's designs in the 1970s and 1980s and the attack that accompanied them suggests that an extremely precarious status persists for the Maya in relation to the Ladino population and their institutions, a status that may or may not be as precarious in other nations where, at a minimum, indigenous rights and culture are recognized.

While there is considerably more that could be said about the past and present character of the Maya - Ladino relationship in Guatemala, it is evident that an initial focus on the Maya majority and the ethno - political dynamic alters our traditional understanding of the history of Guatemala in this century. This emphasis definitely complicates all discussion on the revolutionary / counter - revolutionary thesis, the struggle for democracy, the possibilities for revolutionary and reformist change, popular class politics, and our understanding of how politics are structured and practiced in Guatemala generally. As I have documented, it also lends new insights into how and why the violence in the Maya highlands took place where it did, beginning in the late 1970s and continuing throughout most of the 1980s. Although the military was at the forefront of such a vicious attack, it is evident that there had accumulated over time a broader Ladino support for the brutal and sustained nature of this attack due to a combination of economic and ethnic motivations. The 1980s, then, represent a decisive "low - point" in Maya - Ladino relations with little evidence that they have been reconstructed on more sound or conciliatory bases as the civilianization of the Ladino state has taken place, and the military's overt presence has receded to a degree. What has been documented is that the Ladinos' relationship to the Maya is permeated by more than just economic distinctions; there is a long history of intellectual, cultural and political imagery and practices that allows a very limited space for the Maya to counter accepted or standard interpretations of who they are and what it is they may or may not have done to incur the wrath of the dominant Ladino sectors. Despite intellectual and political affirmations to the contrary, the Maya have always been viewed as the political issue in this country even though the Maya were neither the sponsors of nor participants in this set of images, values and beliefs that persist to the present day. To the extent that the Ladino state spurns a more open and conciliatory relationship with the Maya majority, involving a more honest assessment of the recent violence in the northern highlands, it fuels and sustains the very Ladino fears that have consistently underpinned Ladino perceptions of the Maya. It is also becomes further proof of Ladino contempt for the Maya, providing the latter with greater reason to be hostile and vengeful. A true Maya politicization, combined with continued Ladino neglect and intransigence, creates the real possibilities for the Maya turning to more militant and volatile forms of action in the future. Ironically, the images of the Ladinos could ultimately come true, but through no fault of the Maya. The latter have ample and growing confirmation of their standing in society in which the events of the 1980s only exacerbated the precarious status they have held.

Although I have documented a complex series of political and economic events leading up to the massacres and atrocities inflicted upon particular sectors of the Maya population, the overall narrative itself is fairly simple and commonplace historically: the killing and displacement of an indigenous population for the economic benefit entailed in a Western elite vision of development. In the annals of Western civilization and its "encounter" with indigenous peoples in the Western hemisphere, it is not a particularly unique event. What makes this narrative more gripping and horrific is the varied but considerable documentation and interpretation surrounding this very recent encounter. Perhaps in our efforts to emphasize the importance of popular class struggles for progressive change and acts of resistance, and to defend revolutionary activities, we have lost sight of the fact that there is a more violent momentum for change under the ideology of "modernization" or "economic development." Acts of resistance, popular class struggles, or revolutionary activity may not be in any way commensurate in strength when confronted by a state, and in this case a clearly racist state, with an agenda that was concerned with far more than just a guerrilla presence or a certain level of Maya organization. It is in this respect that I believe that those Maya populations that experienced the most brutal aspects of the military assault have much stronger grounds on which to impugn the motives and behavior of the Ladino state and the prevailing interpretation of their recent experience.

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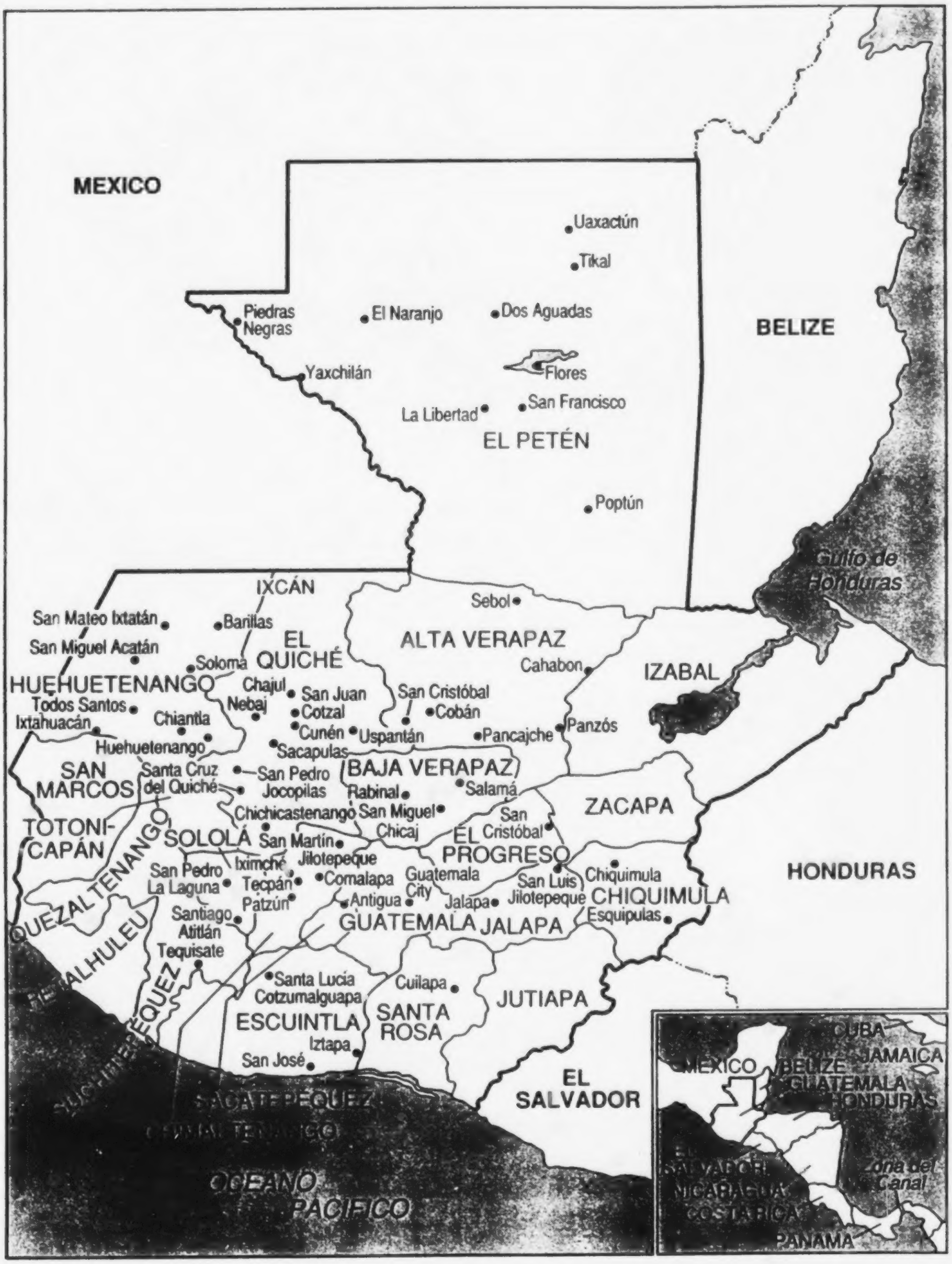
Appendix One


MEXICO
Uaxactún
Tikal
Piedras Negras
El Naranjo
Dos Aguadas
Yaxchilán
Flores
La Libertad
San Francisco
EL PETÉN
Poptún
BELIZE
Golfo de Honduras
IXCÁN
Sebol
San Mateo Ixtatán
Barillas
San Miguel Acatán
EL QUICHÉ
ALTA VERAPAZ
Soloma
Cahabon
IZABAL
HUEHUETENANGO
Chajul
San Juan Cotzal
San Cristóbal
Cobán
Todos Santos
Nebaj
Ixtahuacán
Chiantla
Cunén
Uspantán
Pancajche
Panzós
Huehuetenango
Sacapulas
SAN MARCOS
Santa Cruz del Quiché
San Pedro Jocopilas
BAJA VERAPAZ
Rabinal
Salamá
ZACAPA
TOTONICAPÁN
Chichicastenango
San Miguel Chicaj
EL PROGRESO
San Cristóbal
SOLOLÁ
San Martín Jilotepeque
Iximché
QUEZALTENANGO
San Pedro La Laguna
Tecpán
Comalapa
Guatemala City
San Luis Jilotepeque
Chiquimula
HONDURAS
Patzún
Antigua
Jalapa
CHIQUIMULA
Santiago Atitlán
GUATEMALA
JALAPA
Esquipulas
RETALHULEU
Tequisate
SUCHITEPÉQUEZ
Santa Lucía Cotzumalguapa
Cuilapa
JUTIAPA
ESCUINTLA
SANTA ROSA
Iztapa
San José
EL SALVADOR
SACATEPÉQUEZ
CHIMALTENANGO
OCEANO PACIFICO
CUBA
JAMAICA
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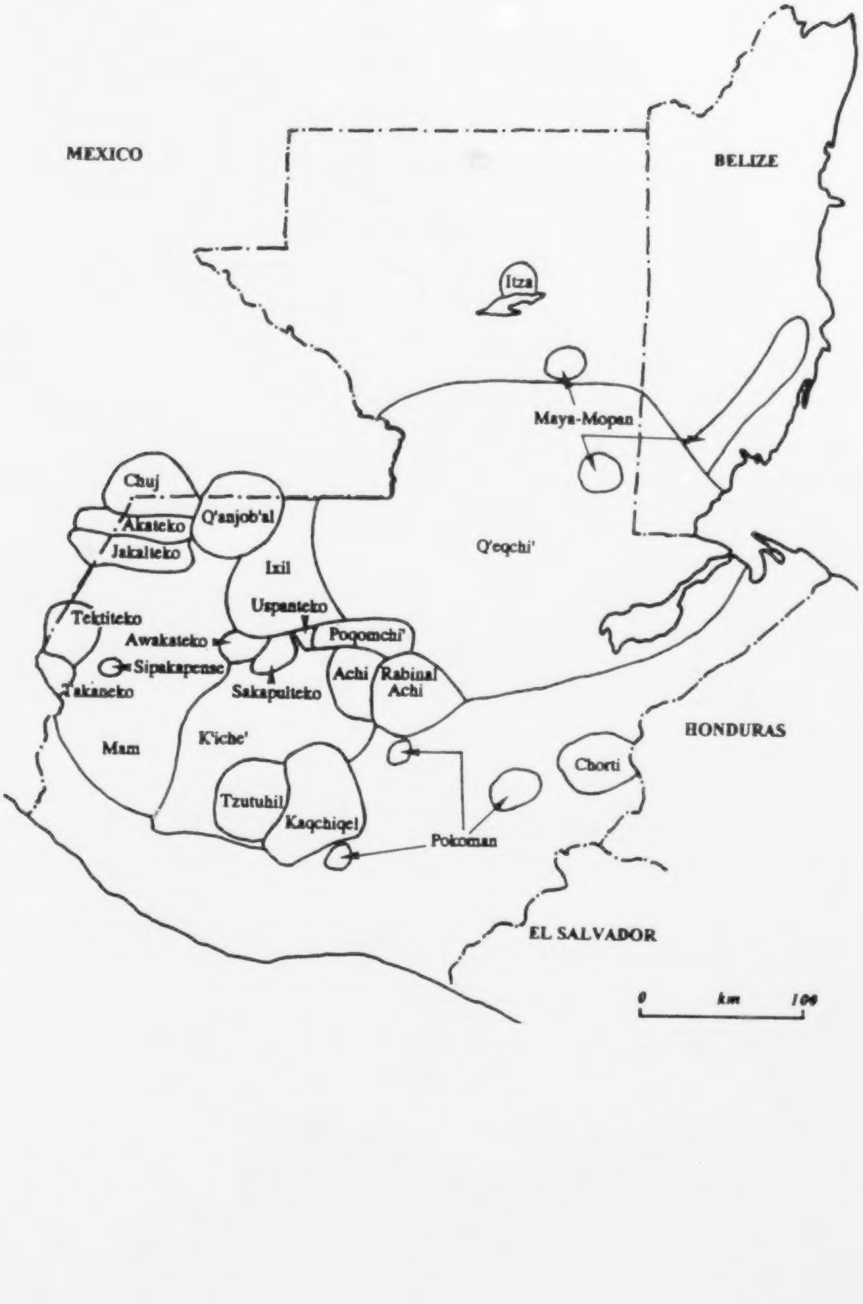
EL SALVADOR
NICARAGUA
COSTA RICA
Zona del Canal
PANAMA

Appendix Two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Uspanteko
Awakateko
Poqomchi'
Sipakapense
Achi
Rabinal Achi
Takaneko
Sakapulteko
HONDURAS
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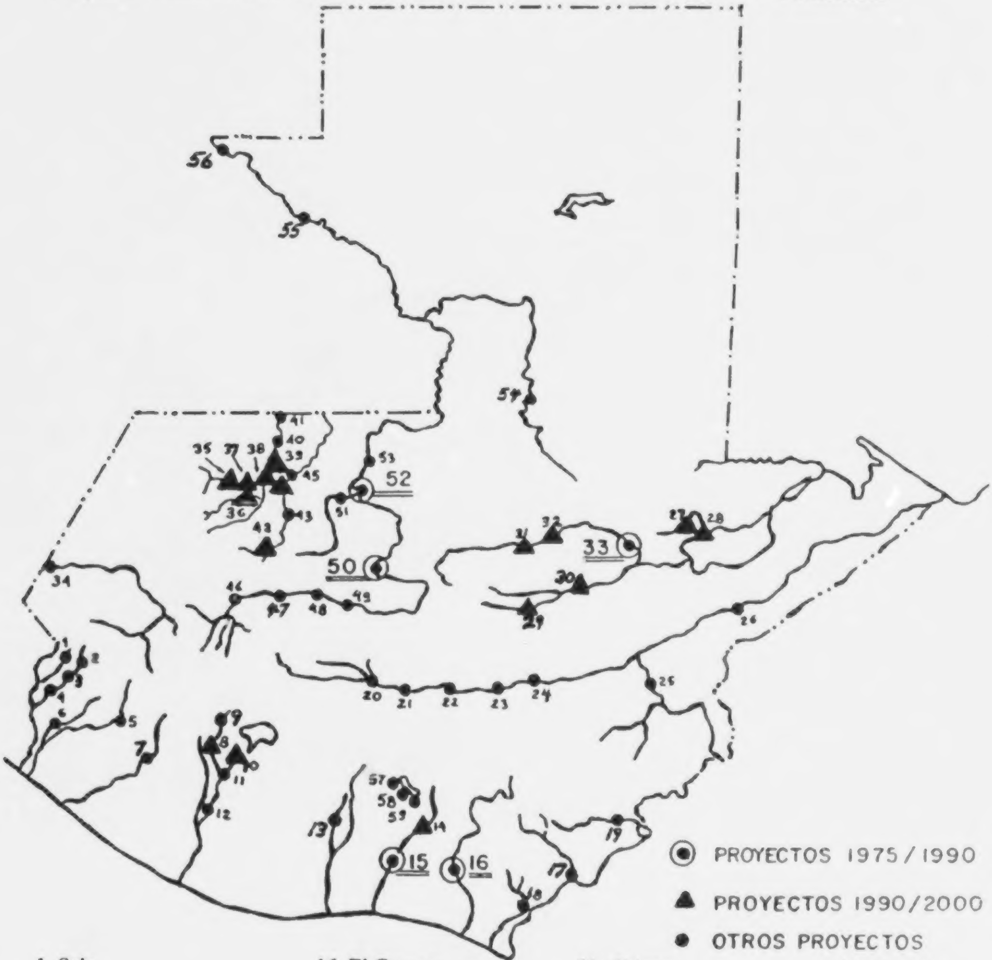
Appendix Three

Proyectos Hidroelectricos Del Plan Maestro De Electrificacion De Guatemala

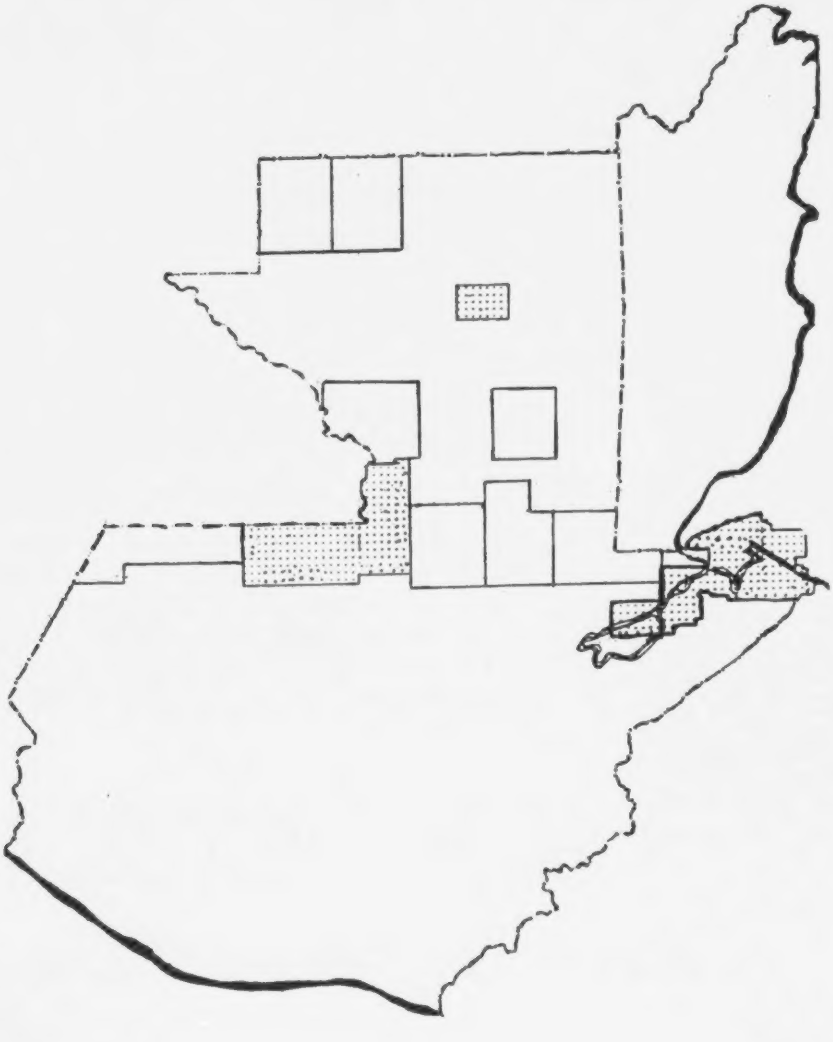


1. Sala
2. Ponpeya
3. Virginia
4. San Jose
5. Blanca Flor
6. Punta Arenas
7. Retalhuleu
8. Corral
9. Chusibel
10. Atitlan
11. Cavernagua
12. Nahualate
13. Monte Maria
14. Agua Caliente
15. Maria Linda
16. El Carmen
17. Estanzuela
18. Montufar
19. Monjas
20. Cucul
21. Pixcaya
22. Sisimite
23. El Guayabo
24. Tulumajillo
25. Camotan
26. Los Amates
27. Chacchila
28. Sauce
29. Matanzas
30. Polochic
31. Chicoc
32. Semuc
33. Chulac
34. Canibal
35. El Arco
36. Tzucanca
37. Quixabaj
38. San Juan
39. Montecristo
40. La Campana
41. San Ramon
42. Sumalito
43. Alta Vista
44. Estrella Polar
45. San Luis
46. Serchil
47. Paizajel
48. Jocotales
49. Los Tapezcos
50. Pueblo Viejo
51. El Copon
52. Xalala
53. Santo Domingo
54. El Chapayal
55. Salvamento
56. Piedras Negras
57. El Durazno
58. Calderas 1
59. Calderas 2

Appendix Four

(Prensa Libre 21 November 1979)

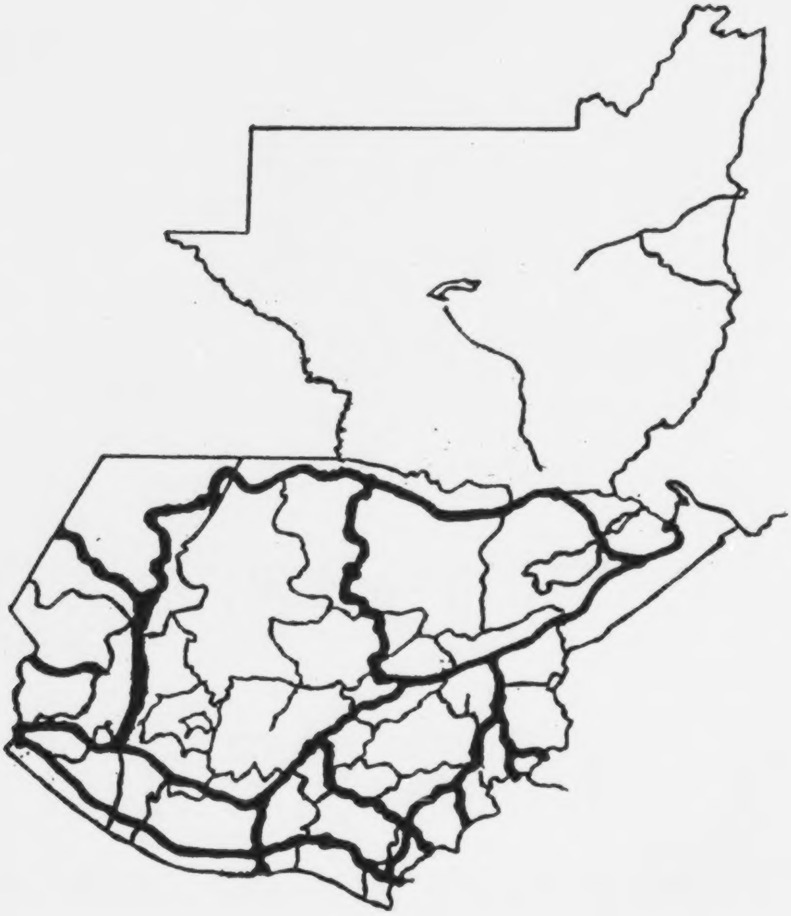
"Mapa De Localizacion De Areas Para Contrato De Operaciones Petroliferos"



Appendix Five

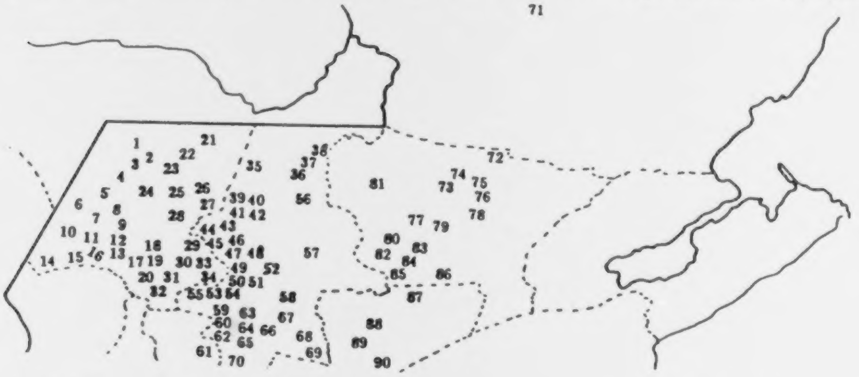
(Prensa Libre 20 October 1980)

Map of proposed *Anillo Periférico Nacional*



Appendix Six

Map of towns - municipal districts of major military actions against the civil population



HUEHUETENANGO

1. Bulej
2. Petanac
3. Sebep
4. Yolcultac
5. Nenton
6. El Tabacal
7. Santa Ana Huista
8. El Tablón
9. San Antonio Huista
10. La Democracia
11. Buena Vista
12. San Pedro Necta
13. Granadillo
14. Cuilco
15. Chejoj
16. Ixtahuacan
17. Colotenango
18. Todos Santos Cuchumatan
19. San Juan Atitan
20. San Sebastion Huehuetenango
21. Xoxlac
22. Nacapoxiac
23. San Mateo Ixtapan
24. San Miguel Acatan
25. Santa Eulalia
26. Barillas
27. Amelco
28. San Juan Ixcoy
29. San Nicolás
30. La Capellanía
31. Chiantla
32. Malacatancito
33. Aguacatan
34. Pichiquil

EL QUICHE

35. Xalcbal
36. La Trinitaria
37. San José La 20
38. Rubelojom
39. Santa Martha
40. Chel
41. La Perla
42. Bisich
43. Ixtupii
44. Bicalamá
45. Sumal
46. Chacalté
47. Xix
48. Chajul
49. Tzalbal
50. Nebaj
51. Xesibacbitz
52. San Juan Cotzal
53. Acul
54. El Pajarito
55. Parraxtut
56. Copán
57. Uspantan
58. San Andres Sajcabaja
59. San Pedro Jocopilas
60. Xesic
61. Santa Cruz del Quiche
62. San Antonio Ilotenango
63. Santa Rosa Cucuyub
64. Ximbaxuc
65. Chiche
66. Chinique
67. San Antonio Sinaché
68. Tactic
69. Joyabaj

EL PETEN

71. La Libertad

ALTA VERAPAZ

72. Yalpemech
73. Semacoch
74. Chisec
75. Yalicac
76. Semuy
77. Sacanix
78. San Pedro Carcha
79. Coban
80. Najtilaguaj
81. El Rancho
82. Las Pacayas
83. Conquito
84. San Cristobal Verapaz
85. Chiyuc
86. Tactic

BAJA VERAPAZ

87. Río Negro
88. Rabinal
89. Concul
90. El Chol

Locations approximate.

Municipal districts underlined.

CEIDEC (1988) p. 360.